

A CRITICAL STUDY OF NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

by

Syed Mohammad Waris Hassan

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Edinburgh

1979



ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of six chapters, the summary of which is as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction to the book; a critical examination of the collection; the object of the thesis; a brief biographical note on the collector of the book, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

Chapter Two: The survey of the literature on Nahj al-Balāgha; medieval and modern criticism with regard to the book's authenticity; religious and political background of the criticism; a brief survey of some of the commentaries.

Chapter Three: Speeches of 'Alī in the early historical works; comparisons with the versions existing in Nahj al-Balāgha.

Chapter Four: Literary background to Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) Pre-Islamic literature; (2) the Qur'ān.

Chapter Five: The stylistic analysis of Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) al-saj'; (2) al-majaz; (3) al-tashbīh; (4) al-muqabalah wa al-mutabaqah; (5) al-aghlāt al-nahwiyyah; (6) al-amthāl; (7) the language.

Chapter Six: Conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. I. K. A. Howard, who not only read through this thesis, thus favouring me with his valuable time, but also made valuable suggestions from time to time. In fact the sections on al-Shiqshiqiyah and the Covenant of 'Alī were written at his behest. Secondly, I am indebted to Dr. D. S. Straley who was kind enough to undertake the typing of this thesis. If there are no or few mistakes in the thesis, it is because her knowledge of Arabic language and Islamic history has combined with competence.

But the greatest debt I owe is to the land which gave the intellectual world its traditions and language, and to me, refuge in 1957 and its passport in 1960. In this thesis I speak about many schools, but it is the school of this land which not only preserved in me what I had already learnt but added many dimensions to it. The land I speak of is the land of Gibbon and Carlyle, the United Kingdom.

TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration used in this thesis is that of modern Western scholars, with the exception of Nahj al-Balāgha, in which tā' marbūta has been substituted with a instead of ah. This is in conformity with the translators of Nahj al-Balāgha in the sub-continent of India and Pakistan and elsewhere.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Transliteration	iv

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction: A critical examination of the collection	1- 3
The importance of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>	3- 5
The objectives of this thesis	5- 6
The role of the <u>khutbah</u> in the pre-Islamic, Islamic, and post-Islamic societies. References to the speeches of Orthodox and some of the Umayyad Caliphs	6-10
Early collections of the speeches of the Orthodox Caliphs	10-11
Collections of 'Alī's speeches prior to <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> and a critical appraisal of them	11-15
Reasons for people's interest in 'Alī's speeches	15-20
An introduction to the collector of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u> , al-Sharīf al-Radī, the issue of compilation of the book, whether it was compiled by al-Radī or his brother, al-Murtadā; the possible motives for the collection.	20-24

CHAPTER TWO:

A survey of the literature on <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>	
(a) Criticism -- nature of doubts raised with regard to the authenticity	25
The Syrian school of the Mamlūk period:	
(1) Ibn Khallikān	25-27
(2) Ibn Taimiyyah	28-30
(3) al-Dhahabī	31-33
(4) al-Ṣafadī	33-35

(5) al-Yafi'ī	35-36
(6) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī	36-37
Religious and political background to the Mamlūks' criticism of <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>	37-44
Modern Criticism:	45-58
(1) Carl Brockelmann	
(2) Clement Huart	
(3) H.A.R. Gibb	
(4) Ahmad Amīn	
(5) Sāfā Khulūsī	
(6) Jamil Sultān	
(b) Commentaries	59-68
(1) 'Alī ibn Nasīr	
(2) 'Alī ibn Zaid	
(3) Qutb al-Dīn al-Rawandī	
(4) Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī	
(5) Ibn Abī al-Hadīd	
(6) 'Alī ibn Maitham	
(7) Muhammad 'Abduh	

CHAPTER THREE:

Speeches of 'Alī in the early historical writings and their comparisons with the versions rendered by <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>	69-138
(1) Sulaim ibn Qais	
(2) Abū Mikhnaf	
(3) Naṣr ibn Muzāhim	
(4) al-Baladhurī	
(5) al-Dinawarī	
(6) al-Ya'qūbī	
(7) al-Ṭabarī	
(8) Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī	
(9) al-Kulainī	
(10) al-Mufīd	
(11) al-Jāhiz	
Critical analysis and appraisal of	139-165
(a) <u>al-Shiqshiqiyah</u>	
(b) <u>al-'Ahd</u>	

CHAPTER FOUR:

The literary background to Nahj al-Balāgha

- (a) The pre-Islamic literature:
 - (1) al-Shā'ir (the poet) 166-172
 - (2) al-Khaṭīb (the public speaker) and al-Kāhin (the soothsayer) 172-183
- (b) The Qur'ān 183-190

CHAPTER FIVE:

The stylistic analysis of Nahj al-Balāgha

- (a) al-saj' (rhymed prose) 191-199
- (b) al-majaz (metaphor) 199-207
- (c) al-tashbīh (similes and allegories) 207-210
- (d) al-muqabalah, al-mutabaqah, and al-mu'azanah (parallelism) 210-212
- (e) aghlāt al-nahwiyyah (ellipsis) 212-215
- (f) al-amthāl (proverbs) 215-221
- (g) The language 221-242

CHAPTER SIX:

- Conclusion 243-247
- Bibliography 248-258

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nahj al-Balāgha is a book which, in its present form, consists of 239 speeches, 79 letters and 480 wise and sagacious sayings, all attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40A.H./660 A.D.), the fourth of the Orthodox Caliphs of the Sunnites and the first Imam of the Shī'ites. The above material was collected by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, who records at the end of the collection that he had completed it in the year 400 A.H./1009 A.D.

The system that the collector has employed is described by him in the following words:

I observed that his [i.e. 'Alī's] utterances revolve round three aspects. The first being the sermons, the addresses and the commands. The second category is found in the form of letters. And the third in the pronouncements of wisdom and the literary merits expressed in short sentences. I have, therefore, selected some of the best of the speeches [in the first part of the book]. Then the best of his letters [in the second part of the book]; and [finally] the short and wise sayings [in the third part of the book].¹

1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Nahj al-Balāgha (Cairo, n.d.), 3.

However, it appears that the collection falls short of perfection. For one thing, there is no systematic approach in selecting either the sermons and speeches or letters and there is no chronological order in the material presented.¹ Secondly, unlike the Qur'ān where the length of the sūrah seems to be the determining factor, in Nahj al-Balāgha, the long and the short utterances have been placed side by side, which shows that the collector has recorded them at random.² Similarly, there is no attention paid to the degree of eloquence as some of the best utterances have not been given priority.³ Nor does there

-
1. For examples, see entry No. 2, which is a speech said to have been delivered after 'Alī's return from Siffīn, and entry No. 5, which is said to have been delivered after the death of the Prophet. Then entry Nos. 8 and 9 which concern those who fought 'Alī at the battle of Jamal, but in entry No. 10, there again is a flashback to Mu'āwiya and Siffīn. While No. 15 and 16 are said to have been delivered at the beginning of 'Alī's caliphate.
 2. Cf. entry Nos. 1, 2, 3, with entry Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, etc.
 3. For example, the speeches beginning with dhimmatī bi-mā aqūl rahīnah and fa-innā al-jihād bāb min abwāb al-jannah fatahahū Allāh li-khāṣṣati awliyā'ihī, which have been described by outsiders as belonging to the best of 'Alī's speeches, have been recorded at Nos. 16 and 27 respectively.

seem to be any attempt on the part of the collector to classify the subject-matter and record the material accordingly.¹

The importance of Nahj al-Balāgha lies in the fact that the book became a focus of attention for Muslim scholars, and Shī'ites in particular, from the time it came into being. In fact the first commentary on it was written by 'Alī ibn Nāṣir who was a contemporary of the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.² Thenceforth over a hundred commentaries have been written on the book, the most important of which are dealt with later in this thesis. As to its linguistic merits to the Arabs, "it has been said that it ranks below the Words of God but above all the speeches of His Creation."³ This sentence quoted by

-
1. For example, the first speech deals with the unity of God, creation of the heavens and earth, creation of Adam and then it is followed by that which concerns the holy pilgrimage. Speeches, say, concerning the event of Ṣiffīn have been recorded at Nos. 2, 10, 43, 46, 48, 51, 55, 64, 105 in the first part, and Nos. 169, 198, 204, 205, 214, 236 in the second part. Notice the gaps in between.
 2. Al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Hujub (Calcutta, 1912), 253; also 'Abd al-Zahra al-Khaṭīb in his Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1975), 203-4, claims to have seen the manuscript of the commentary in the library of Muḥammad Ḥusain Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, No. 848, and it had been copied from the manuscript dated 700 A.H. The date of the manuscript seen by al-Khaṭīb being 901 A.H./1495 A.D.
 3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol 1 (Cairo, 1959), 24.

4

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656 A.H./1258 A.D.) has been repeated time and again by later commentators and writers on Nahj al-Balāgha. The belief in the supreme linguistic qualities of the material that the book contains, seems to have survived up until modern times. Nāṣif al-Yāzji, the renowned Christian scholar of the nineteenth century, is said to have advised his son: "If you ever wished to excel your equals in 'ilm and adab [roughly translated, traditions and literature], then you must memorise the Qur'ān and Nahj al-Balāgha."¹ Similar sentiments of admiration have been expressed by Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1323 A.H./1905 A.D.) in his comments in the Preface to Nahj al-Balāgha² and Zakī Mubārak, who has been quoted as saying: "If we did not believe in the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, then we would have to admit that of all the people, the Shī'ites were the most capable of producing eloquent prose."³

The book has enjoyed equal reverence in Iran, where the Shī'ites constitute the majority of the population, and amongst the scholars of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt,

1. Al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., 90, 91.

2. Muḥammad 'Abduh, Nahj al-Balāgha, the Preface to (letters) yā, kāf, lām, mīm, nūn, and sīn.

3. Zakī Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī fi Qarn al-Rābi' (Cairo, 1934), 68; al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., 87.

India, and Pakistan. In the subcontinent, two recent works on Nahj al-Balāgha are from scholars who are not Shī'ites.¹ The contribution of Shī'ites to the book, in terms of commentaries, translations, and associated works, is considerable.² The importance of the book is further underlined by the fact that at the middle of the present century, the population of the Shī'ites stood at 40,000,000³ and to all of them Nahj al-Balāgha is the genuine collection of the utterances of their first Imam and therefore, it is their most important, most revered, and most authoritative book after the Qur'ān.

Of all the major works of Islamic scholarship, only Nahj al-Balāgha seems to have received scant attention from Western scholars and this thesis is designed in some measures to provide a balanced study of the book. It questions the validity of some parts of the book in the light of the stylistic analysis, historical evidence, and 'Alī's character as it filters through Nahj al-Balāgha. It takes account of those who have doubted the authenticity and provides a brief background of their spiritual or intellectual station. While it pieces together some parts

-
1. 'Arshī Rampūrī and Ra'īs Aḥmad: the former has written a book on the sources of Nahj al-Balāgha, while the latter has done an Urdu translation.
 2. Some of the translations are by 'Alī Naqī, Faiḍ al-Islām in Persian (printed Iran); by Zafar Maḥdi; Muḥammad Ṣādiq in Urdu (printed Lucknow); Muftī Ja'far Ḥusain in Urdu (printed Lahore, Pakistan); English translation by Muḥammad 'Askarī, from Karachi, Pakistan.
 3. Encyclopaedia Britannica (U.S.A., 1974), vol. IX, 141.

of it from independent early sources to prove that the charge of total fabrication is not sustainable.

However, those seemingly positive and proven parts of Nahj al-Balāgha should be further considered in the light of the literary background of the period and the people. A few decades away, that is, at the time known as Jāhiliyyah, literacy amongst people was rare and therefore, the nation had no recorded history. And yet its past had managed to survive in the form of poetry and in the speeches of renowned orators. The latter used short rhymed sentences in order, as it now seems, to assist the memories of the illiterate listeners. The lengthy speeches attributed to Aktham ibn Saifī, Ḥājib ibn Zurārah, ‘Amr ibn Ma’dikarīb, and others, on such occasions as in the presence of the Persian king¹ may have been forged by the later Arab school trying to score a victory, through history, over the now up and coming mawālī. Yet there is a strong case for the claim that some of the poems and speeches of the Jāhiliyyah had been preserved and were quoted when the occasion arose. It seems that Muḥammad, while cancelling all the practices that used to take place in the days of the Jāhiliyyah, barring those customs which had some religious significance such as the institution of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, encouraged the recitation of the Jāhili prose. This gesture of his became doubly significant when he appeared

1. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, vol. I (Cairo, 1928), 174.

indifferent to poets and frowned on their works. But when it came to prose, he even quoted some of it himself. Al-Jāḥiẓ, quoting some of the speeches of Qus ibn Sā'idā al-Iyādī as quoted by Muḥammad, remarks: "And this is an isnād which surpasses all that one can desire or hope for."¹ The evidence that Muḥammad actually encouraged eloquent speakers is provided by the remarks he is reported to have made to 'Amr ibn Aḥtam, after he had heard him speak eloquently, "Verily, magical powers are reserved for this kind of speech!"²

Thus aided by traditions and the forces of pre-Islamic habits and now further encouraged by the edict of the Messenger of Allāh, the making and preserving of eloquent speeches became the order of the day and by the time Muḥammad was dead, the speech, al-khuṭbah, had assumed religious significance. That religious significance lasted the entire period of the Orthodox Caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate, and up until the last days of the 'Abbāsīd power, as the fourth century writer, al-'Askarī, testifies:

And what is also understood from al-khuṭbah, i.e. public-speaking, and al-kitābah, i.e. prose writing, is that these two are closely associated with matters of religion and government. For on these two rests their

1. 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn (Cairo, 1332 A.H.), 31.

2. Ibid.

8

entire structure. While al-shi'r, i.e. poetry, has no such links with those two.¹

Speeches of Orthodox Caliphs

In the brief period of sovereignty, two years, three months and ten days, according to al-Mas'ūdī, the first Caliph, Abū Bakr (11-13 A.H./632-4 A.D.) does not seem to have made many speeches which have been recorded. His prime and important address, that at al-Saqīfā of Banū Sā'idah, along with some other speeches have been preserved. The austere, shrewd and statesmanlike 'Umar, the second Caliph, (13-23 A.H./634-44 A.D.) seems to have been more concerned with practical politics and, perhaps, less with al-balāghah, i.e. eloquence in speeches. It appears that when the second Caliph did speak, his speech was not necessarily designed to contain linguistic decor or rhymed synonyms. Confronted with such important a task as mobilising people to go to war against the mighty Persian Empire, he is reported to have made a speech which takes no more space in the page than approximately one and a half lines. "Innakum," said he, "qad asbahtum fī ghair dār maqām bi-al-Hijāz wa-qad wa'adukum al-nabī fath bilād kisrā fa-sīrū ilā ard fārs." (i.e., "Hijaz is no longer the place for you; and the Prophet had promised you the conquest of Persia. So go to the land of the Persians.")²

1. Al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh al-'Askarī, Al-Ṣanā'atāin (Cairo, 1952), 136.

2. Al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1948), 315.

However, short or long, the Caliphs had to deliver speeches, being the successor to the man who had founded the state using as one of his means the power of his speeches, and had administered it according to the pronouncements of the Qur'ān. In fact speaking on the pulpit had become such an important symbol of authority that when the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (24-35 A.H./643-655 A.D.), was raised to the caliphate, he showed signs of not being accustomed to public speaking. He stood on the pulpit not knowing what to say for quite a while, then he said:

Verily Abū Bakr and 'Umar used to prepare for this place [and occasion]. But you are more in need of a just leader [imām 'ādil] than the leader who carves out the speeches [imām yushaqqiq al-khutub]. If you are still alive the speeches will come [in due course].¹

Here the Caliph was trying to rectify the hitherto held belief that good speech-making was one of the major symbols of authority. Nevertheless, it had been infused in the system. In the Friday prayer the khutbah constitutes a necessary part of the service; and perhaps it was because of the khutbah that the Friday prayer became the sign of authority. For in the days when Caliphs had lost all power to, say, Buwaihids or Saljuqs, they were still recognised as Caliphs because they were allowed to exercise

1. Ibn al-Wāḍih al-Ya'qūbī, Al-Ta'rīkh, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1960), 163.

the prerogatives which included leading the Friday prayer. "What a good thing it is to have authority," said 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Ziyād (d. 67 A.H./686 A.D.), the Umayyad governor of Basrah and Kufah, "if one did not have to put up with the rattle of official robes and [in delivering speeches] did not have to strive after eloquence."¹ Another story which strengthens the point in question is the one about 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86 A.H./684-705 A.D.), the Umayyad Caliph who was told by someone: "Old age has hastened to you, O Commander of the Faithful!" He replied: "Why should it not do so while I have to submit my intelligence to the people every Friday, once or twice?"²

Since the weekly khuṭbah was the one of the functions of the incumbent, he was naturally looking for fresh material to base his speech on. In the long list of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd Caliphs, and in the speeches that have been recorded in their names, there is hardly one which speaks about the current and the contemporary conditions of their domain. Nor did they refer very frequently to the social or economic conditions of their people, or about the steps they had taken or were going to take, to improve the living conditions, if such improvement was necessary, of their subjects. Instead, the Caliphs concentrated on the mode, eloquence, and the styles of the Prophet and the Orthodox Caliphs. On coming to power, one

-
1. Al-Jāhīz, Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1332 A.H.) 75.
 2. Ibid.

of the first measures which al-Saffāh (132-136 A.H./749-753 A.D.), the first Caliph of the 'Abbāsids, took, was to order a collection of speeches, al-khutub, and that resulted in bringing forth a thousand booklets which contained the same number of speeches.¹ A hundred years later, al-Jāhiz (d. 255 A.H./868 A.D.) was thus able to say:

And there are the speeches of the Prophet, all recorded, protected, immortalised, and well known. And there are the speeches of Abū Bakr [the first Caliph], 'Umar [the second Caliph], 'Uthmān [the third Caliph], and 'Alī [the fourth Caliph], may God be pleased with them.²

Yet, as we have mentioned earlier, the collections of the speeches of the first three Caliphs do not appear to have survived to any great extent.

Collections of 'Alī's speeches prior to Nahj al-Balāgha

However, in the case of 'Alī, it seems that there were many collections in existence before Nahj al-Balāgha came into being (400 A.H./1009 A.D.). 'Abd al-Zahrā al-Khaṭīb provides the following collections of 'Alī's

-
1. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Faqīh, Al-Buldān (Leiden, 1885), 2.
 2. Al-Jāhiz, op. cit., 113.

speeches which are said to have existed prior to Nahj al-Balāgha:

1. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn fī al-Juma' wa al-A'yād wa ghairihimā¹ by Zaid ibn Wahb al-Juhnī. This collection according to al-Khaṭīb, appeared to be the earliest as the author lived in the pre- and post-Islamic periods. He died 96 A.H./714 A.D.²
2. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Abū Rawḥ Faraj ibn Farwah through Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah, from Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.³
3. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah al-'Abdī. "This book was extant," writes al-Khaṭīb, "at the time of Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, who died in 1107 or 1109 [A.H./1695 or 1697 A.D.] and who has quoted from it in his commentary al-Burhān."⁴
4. Kitāb Khutbah al-Zahrā' by Abū Mikhnaḥ who died 157 A.H./773 A.D.⁵
5. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Ismā'īl ibn Mihrān al-Sukūnī. Al-Khaṭīb cites both al-Najjāshī and al-Kashshī as the people who have mentioned al-Sukūnī and his collection, in their Fihrists.⁶

-
1. Al-Māmiqānī, Itqān al-Maqāl (Najaf, n.d.), 192. (kh)
All the references quoted by al-Khaṭīb have the letters "kh" in brackets.
 2. Al-'Asqalānī, al-Iṣābah fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābah, vol. 1, 567. (kh)
 3. Agha Buzurg, al-Dharī'ah ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah, vol. 7, 190. (kh)
 4. 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1975), 52-3.
 5. Ibid., 53.
 6. Ibid., 54.

6. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by al-Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīm.¹
7. Khutub 'Alī by Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥakam al-Fazārī.²
8. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by al-Wāqidī, who died 207 A.H./822 A.D.³
9. Khutub 'Alī by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, who died in 212 A.H./827 A.D. (al-Khaṭīb mentions the year to be 202, which seems to be a printing mistake.)⁴
10. Khutub 'Alī by Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204 or 206 A.H./819 or 821 A.D.).⁵
11. Khutub 'Alī wa Kutubihī ilā 'Ummālihī by 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Madā'inī, who died 225 A.H./839 A.D.⁶
12. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥammād al-Rāzī, one of the Companions of al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī.⁷
13. Mi'at Kalimah li-Amīr al-Mu'minīn by 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ.⁸
14. Rasā'il Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Ibrāhīm ibn Hilāl al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī, who died 283 A.H./896 A.D. Al-Khaṭīb quotes Ta'sīs al-Shī'ah to say that he was at first a Zaydite then converted to the Imamites.⁹

1. Ibid., 54-55.

2. Al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Najaf, n.d.), 27. (kh)

3. Agha Buzurg, op. cit., vol. 7, 7. (kh)

4. Al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., vol. 1, 58.

5. Al-Ṭūsī, op. cit., 146. (kh)

6. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (Cairo, n.d.), 155. (kh)

7. Al-Najjāshī, al-Fihrist (Najaf, n.d.), 148. (kh)

8. Ḥādī Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', Mustadrak Nahj al-Balāgha (Najaf, n.d.), 47. (kh)

9. Al-Ṭūsī, op. cit., 27. (kh)

15. Al-Khuṭub al-Mu'arrabāt by the above author.¹
16. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaimān al-Nahmī.²
17. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn and the commentary on it, by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.³
18. Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn.⁴
19. Mawā'iz 'Alī.⁵
20. Rasā'il 'Alī.⁶
21. Kalām 'Alī.⁷
22. Al-Malāhim by 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Yahyā al-Jalaūdī (d. 332 A.H./943 A.D.).⁸

The list which I have taken from al-Khaṭīb's book, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, and which, perhaps incorporates all that has been written on the subject of pre-Nahj al-Balāgha collections of 'Alī's speeches, by others, appears to be impressive, at least at first glance. On a closer examination, however, it appears that there may be room for doubts in respect of many works and their authors that have been listed. A few examples are as follows:

-
1. Al-Shahristānī, Mā Huwā Nahj al-Balāgha (Najaf, n.d.), 43. (kh)
 2. Agha Buzurg, op. cit., vol. 7, 183, 188. (kh)
 3. M. Kāmil Ḥusain, al-Himmah fī Ma'rifat al-A'imma (Cairo, n.d.). (kh)
 4. Al-Khaṭīb, op. cit., vol. 1, 64.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Al-Najjāshī, op. cit., 166. (kh)

- (a) Nos. 2 and 3, i.e. Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn collected by Faraj ibn Farwah and Khutub Amīr al-Mu'minīn by Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah are more likely to be one and the same. As the latter is the source of the former.
- (b) Kitāb Khutbah al-Zahrā' (No. 4 in the above list) by Abū Mikhnaḥ has only been mentioned by al-Ṭūsī. Ibn Nadīm who gives a long list of Abū Mikhnaḥ's works does not mention this book. Furthermore, the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha in all probability, would have referred to it had it existed.
- (c) The same is applicable to al-Wāqidī's collection (No. 8 in the list). The collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, refers to al-Wāqidī's work al-Jamal in Nahj al-Balāgha (entry No. 75 part 3) but there is no mention of the said collection in all the three parts of Nahj al-Balāgha.
- (d) As far as Khutub 'Alī by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (No. 9 in the above list) is concerned, there is no mention of it, as far as I know, in the recognised bibliographical works of either Sunnites or the Shī'ites. Here even al-Khaṭīb does not provide a reference. Similarly, there are no references given by al-Khaṭīb against Nos. 18, Khutub 'Alī, 19, Mawā'iz 'Alī or No. 21, Kalām 'Alī. However, taking account of those authors who have been commonly mentioned by the authors of the books of al-Ṭabaqāt, like al-Najjāshī, al-Kashshī, al-Ṭūsī, Ibn Nadīm, Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, it can safely be assumed that Nahj al-Balāgha was not the first collection of 'Alī's utterances.

Reasons for people being interested in 'Alī's speeches

The interest in 'Alī's speeches was generated, and sustained, owing to reasons, some of which may be as follows:

(1) Eloquence: Being a product of the household that presented al-kitāb, i.e. the Qur'ān, and a constant companion to his first cousin and father-in-law, Muḥammad, 'Alī spoke in the language, which through the force of Islam, abrogated all the contemporary dialects. He was eloquent in speech and elegant in style. There is the evidence to suggest that he was studied and imitated by the following generations. The two persons who became renowned in the art of eloquence in the post-Orthodox Caliphate period, were 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yahyā, the secretary to the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān II (127-132 A.H./744-50 A.D.), of whom Gibb has the following to say: "The earliest Arabic prose works known to us are, in fact three 'epistles' composed by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yahyā (d. 750 A.D.) . . ." ¹ Now this 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is reported to have said: "I have memorised [no less than] seventy sermons of al-asla' [i.e. the bald, a nickname given to 'Alī] and they still poured forth and they still remained unencompassed!" ² The other person of letters and literature was Ibn Nubātah (d. 374 A.H./984 A.D.) "who was," says Gibb, "Saif al-Dawla's court preacher . . . wrote entire sermons in saj', these collected

1. Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1974), 51.

2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), 24.

by his son, have always been highly esteemed for their style and contents."¹ Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes Ibn Nubātah to the effect that he too had memorised 'Alī's sermons² and then proceeds to compare some of the sermons of Ibn Nubātah with some of the sermons of 'Alī³ showing how the former had appropriated, in some instances, the ideas, even the words of the latter. It also appears that interest in 'Alī's speeches was not confined to the specialists like the aforesaid two, but the speeches had become the pastime of society at the time, as al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 A.H./956 A.D.) records:

And that which has been memorised by the people of his speeches on all occasions, amounts to four hundred and eighty-two which he had delivered spontaneously and which has been in currency from him, in people's conversations and in their actions.⁴

(2) A form of protest against the governments of the day:

The six decades that followed 'Alī's death had witnessed the mass persecutions of his supporters. Prominent Companions like Ḥujr ibn 'Adī (executed 52 A.H./672 A.D.) and 'Amr ibn al-Ḥamiq had not, on the available historical evidence, organised a revolt against the government apart

1. Gibb, op. cit., 89.

2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 7, 211-16.

3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 2, 80.

4. Al-Mas'ūdī, op. cit., vol. 2, 431.

from disobeying the official order to renounce and curse 'Alī. The populace of Ḥijāz and Iraq found itself not allowed to mention the name of 'Alī or relate a tradition from or a saying of him. Those who disobeyed were subjected to severe punishments which in many cases took the form of execution. In Kufah scores of houses were razed to the ground and many, like Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī (d. 93 A.H./711 A.D.) were made to flee. The sermons and the speeches of 'Alī would have been forgotten, as we have noted above that the collections of the speeches of the three Orthodox Caliphs seemed to have been lost, but for the fact that the sufferings of the people made them immortal. It is a fact that the organised Shī'ism was not born on the day of al-Ghadīr, but it was born after 'Alī, in the basements of deserted homes and amongst the bereaved families and the community of the under-privileged.

(3) The wide coverage of 'Alī's words and wars by the early historians: Another far reaching result of the persecution was the drift of the intellectuals towards 'Alī and a pro-'Alī attitude. Fleeing from the atrocities at home, some of the followers of 'Alī headed east, to the lands of modern Iran, and preached the merits, al-fadā'il, the imamate, and the infallibility, al-'ismah, of 'Alī and that was one of the reasons for the eventual overthrow of the Umayyads. But those who stayed did so living with burning resentment against the oppressors. In the year

83 A.H./702 A.D. some of them took to arms and joined 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ash'ath against the Umayyads. The ensuing battle, which is known to the historians as the "battle of al-Jamājim", was lost and many of the Qurra' were killed or drowned. Apart from taking up arms against the government, their act of defiance included the recitation of a sermon of 'Alī.¹

Those Qurra' included Sa'id ibn Jubair, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Lailāh, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, and al-Sha'bī, together with others who became sources for the early historians. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons that the early historians have given more coverage to the battles fought by 'Alī (although they were no more than civil wars) than, say, to the more important battles against the Persian or Byzantine empires. The same applies to the coverage of 'Alī's words which alone constituted the act of defiance against the early governments of the Umayyads. Abū Mikhnaf, al-Wāqidī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas'ūdī, all have been said by someone or the other to be Shī'ites. Some of them may have been. But it is more likely that they were echoing the sentiments of their sources and the society. Al-Dīnawarī, who is interested in the wars of Islam but only as far as they involved Persians, does, however, cover the battles of al-Jamal, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān, not probably because of the scale or the nature of the wars but more, perhaps, because they involved the personality of 'Alī.

1. Al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk, vol. 6 (Cairo, 1964), 357.

(4) Religious motives: To the Shī'ites, the utterances of 'Alī, who is their first Imam, have always been important. They regard him as mangūs min Allāh (i.e. divinely appointed) and ma'sūm (i.e. free from sins). Their motives in preserving and transmitting 'Alī's utterances are not unlike other religious communities which have done the same in respect of the utterances of the founder or the leader of their respective religious communities.

The collector -- al-Sharīf al-Raḍī

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain commonly known as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was born at Baghdad in 359 A.H./969 A.D. His father, al-Ḥusain ibn Mūsā was one of the notables of the city to whom the office of Naqīb al-Ṭālibīn was assigned by the government of the day; which meant managing the affairs connected with the community claiming to be the descendants of 'Alī's father, Abū Ṭālib, and looking into the injustices done to them, if there were any, on behalf of the government.¹ This office was delegated to al-Sharīf al-Raḍī in 380 A.H./990 A.D. while his father was still alive.²

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī is said to have received his early education in theology, grammar, language and associated subjects from Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān al-Mufīd, Abū al-Fath

1. 'Abd al-Malik al-Tha'ālabī, Yatīmat al-Dahr, vol. 3 (Cairo, 1947), 131.

2. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. 4 (Beirut, n.d.), 414.

'Uthmān ibn al-Jinnī, al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sīrāfī, al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad commonly known as Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, and Muḥammad ibn 'Imrān al-Marzubānī. Ibn al-Jawzī's comments on the last mentioned are that his weaknesses were three: Inclination towards Shī'ism, inclination towards the Mu'tazilites, and mixing up what he had heard from one source (but probably not authorised to transmit) with what he had been authorised to transmit.¹

Al-Sharīf appears to have been inclined towards poetry from a very early age. Al-Tha'ālabī (d. 429 A.H./ 1037 A.D.) states that he composed poetry when he was little over ten years of age.² Then the same author goes on to say that al-Raḍī was the arch-poet, al-ash'ar, amongst the Ṭālibites if not amongst the Qurashites at large.³ Ibn Khallikān quotes Ibn al-Jinnī to the effect that al-Raḍī had memorised the Qur'ān in his early youth and in a very short period.⁴

He composed much poetry which was collected in four volumes. Amongst the books he wrote there were many dealing with the Qur'ān such as: Majāzāt al-Qur'ān, Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān, Al-Mutashābih fī al-Qur'ān, Talkhīṣ al-Bayān 'an Majāzāt al-Qur'ān. His other works include:

-
1. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, Al-Muntazam fī Ta'rīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam, vol. 7, 177.
 2. Al-Tha'ālabī, op. cit., vol. 3, 131, 148.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1972),

Majāzāt al-Āthār al-Nabawīyah, Akhbār Qudāt Baghdād. He also wrote a life of his father and collected the poems of al-Ḥajjāj. He had also written some treatises which were in three volumes.¹ It is only al-Ṣafadī who mentions Nahj al-Balāgha in the list of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's compositions quoting Ibn Taymīyya's view on it.²

Basing themselves on the statement which first appeared in Ibn Khallikān's biographical note on al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Ḥajar, Brockelmann, Huart, and Gibb have assigned the authorship of Nahj al-Balāgha to al-Raḍī's brother, al-Murtaḍā. There, of course, is the possibility that al-Murtaḍā, who lived thirty years longer than his younger brother, al-Raḍī, may have added something to the book. This possibility is further strengthened by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, who at one point towards the end of his commentary, points out that al-Raḍī had ended the original book there, adding: "It is said that the additional material was incorporated in the life time of the collector and with his approval."³

The fact that Nahj al-Balāgha was collected by al-Raḍī and not by his brother, al-Murtaḍā, is proved firstly, by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd who has written a short biographical note on the collector, al-Raḍī⁴, in his commentary, and,

1. Khalīl ibn Aibak al-Ṣafadī, Al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1949), 374.

2. See the Chapter: "Doubts on the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha" in this thesis.

3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 20, 180.

4. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, 31-41.

secondly, in some of the books listed above, and still extant, al-Raḍī refers to Nahj al-Balāgha calling it his collection¹ and, thirdly, the unanimity of the commentators of the Nahj al-Balāgha from the time of al-Raḍī up to the present time, that the compilation of Nahj al-Balāgha belongs to al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

The Motives of the collector

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī explains in his introduction to Nahj al-Balāgha, the reason for his compilation: "Early in my youth," writes al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, "I began to write a book on the exclusive merits of the Imams [intending] that it should consist of the best that has been said of them and has been attributed to them in the way of speeches. I gave the reason for writing the book in the beginning of it. However, I could only finish the part which concerns the merits of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī. As for the rest, the impediments of time and the daily preoccupation [with other matters] came between me and it. [But what I had written] I had divided it into chapters and sections. The last chapter contained what has been attributed to 'Alī of short, wise and sagacious sayings and proverbs without including either long speeches or letters. This part [of my intended book] was appreciated by brothers and friends who, being highly impressed by its contents, asked me to

1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Al-Majāzāt al-Nabawīyah (Najaf, 1328 A.H.), 21, 22, 41.

compose a book containing the selected utterances of 'Alī in all aspects, i.e. the speeches, the letters, the preachings and any other utterance of literary quality . . ."¹

However, there is a couplet quoted by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī in the above introduction which points to some other possible reason than the one stated. The couplet belongs to Farazdaq as he addresses Jarīr:

When all has been said and done
Then those are my forefathers
Bring O Jarīr
The like of them if you can.²

Here perhaps, is the message to the Shī'ite rulers, the Buwaihids, who had kept the Sunnī Caliph as the head of the state. It was a fact that 'Alī was al-Raḍī's direct ancestor and it was also a fact that according to the Shī'ites, the caliphate originally and actually belonged to him. Through 'Alī's utterances, therefore, it may have been intended to remind people of 'Alī and of his lineage's claim to the caliphate.

-
1. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, (Preface to) Nahj al-Balāgha (Cairo, n.d.), 1-6.
 2. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE ON NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

A. Criticism

Roughly, those who have expressed doubts about Nahj al-Balāgha divide into the following categories: (1) Those who have doubted some of the ideas; (2) those who have doubted the work on the basis of the language and the expressions; (3) those who have doubted the compilation of the book, whether it was done by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī or his brother, al-Sharīf al-Murtadā; (4) those who have doubted some of the contents vis-a-vis some of the Companions (al-Ṣaḥāba); (5) those who have doubted some of the contents as they fail to conform with their image of 'Alī; (6) those who have doubted the authenticity basing their arguments on the parts of the book which appear to be offensive to a certain section of the community such as women; and, (7) those who have questioned the work or some of its contents on the basis of isnād. Now let us examine the literature connected with criticism in details:

Group I -- the Syrian School of the Mamlūk period

(1) Ibn Khallikān: Shams al-Dīn, Abū al-'Abbās, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, 608-681 A.H./1211-1282 A.D.

As far as I am aware, Ibn Khallikān was the first to speak about the uncertainty. His book Wafayāt al-A'yān

is a biographical work covering 865 biographical notes on the same number of people who, for one reason or the other, were acknowledged to be distinguished by the Islamic world of his time. Excluding, of course, the Companions of the Prophet on whose lives the biographical literature, even in Ibn Khallikān's time, was readily available. In the said book, Ibn Khallikān, while speaking about 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain, better known as al-Sharīf al-Murtadā wrote thus:

Al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, Abu al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn al-Ṭāhir Dhī al-Manāqib Abī Ahmad al-Ḥusain ibn Mūsā ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm: He was naqīb al-ṭālibīn¹ and a leader in the

-
1. Naqīb al-Ṭālibīn: for the description of the office called al-Niqābah I quote Jurjī Zaidān as follows:
"Al-Niqābah: the headmanship of the nobility. The full title being al-Niqābat al-Ashrāf indicating that the concern of the office was with the nobility of the Muslims, the members of the Prophet's household. The Prophet's family enjoyed honour and respect through the measures which the authorities took to safeguard for them. They used to appoint a chief amongst the descendants of the Prophet to look after their affairs; keep a check on their genealogy; record their births and deaths; prevent them from engaging in an unsuitable occupation; prevent them from committing the unlawful acts, make representations to the government on their behalf; make the members of the household pay their dues; claim the share of dhū al-qurbah from the allocated grants and the booty and distribute the same amongst the descendants; prevent their girls ~~to~~ from

~~marry~~
marrying/

sciences of scholastic theology and of refined culture, taste, and literary graces and poetry. He is the brother of al-Raḍī who will be mentioned, God Willing later on. He is the author of several books on the Shī'ite religion and an essay on the fundamentals of religion. He is also the author of a voluminous collection of poems. In his poetry, wherever he handles the subtle perceptions he excels and this he has done on many occasions. People differ about the book called Nahj al-Balāgha which is a collection of the utterances of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whether it was collected by him or his brother, al-Raḍī. It has been said that the book is not the collection of the utterances of 'Alī and the one who has collected it and attributed to him is the one who has invented it. And God knows best.¹

marry^{ing} non-Sayyids; and other things like the above which needed enforcing on that section of community, they were enforced through Naqīb al-Ashrāf, their representative." Jurjī Zaidān, Tārīkh Tamaddun al-Islāmī, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1902), p. 201.

1. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. 1 (Istanbul, n.d.), p. 423. The text reads:

الشَّرف المُرْتَضَى أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الطَّاهِرِ ذِي الْمَنَاقِبِ
 أَبِي أَحْمَدَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ مُوسَى بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ : كَانَ
 نَفِيبَ الطَّالِبِينَ وَكَانَ إِمَامًا فِي عِلْمِ الْكَلَامِ وَالْأَدَبِ وَالشِّعْرِ
 وَهُوَ أَخُو الرَّضِيِّ وَسَيَّاتِي ذِكْرُهُ إِنْشَاءُ اللَّهِ وَلَهُ تَصَانِيفٌ عَلَى
 مَذْهَبِ الشَّيْبَعَةِ وَمَقَالَةٌ فِي أَصُولِ الدِّينِ وَلَهُ دِيْوَانٌ شِعْرٌ كَبِيرٌ
 وَإِذَا وَصِفَ اللَّطِيفُ أَجَادَنِيهِ وَقَدْ اسْتَعْمَلَهُ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمَوَاضِعِ
 وَقَدْ اخْتَلَفَ النَّاسُ فِي كِتَابِ نَهْجِ الْبَلَاغَةِ الْمَجْمُوعِ مِنْ كَلَامِ الْإِمَامِ
 عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ هَلْ هُوَ جَمْعُهُ أَمْ جَمَعَ أَخُوهُ الرَّضِيُّ
 وَقَدْ قِيلَ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ كَلَامِ عَلِيٍّ وَإِنَّمَا الَّذِي جَمَعَهُ وَنَسَبَهُ إِلَيْهِ هُوَ الَّذِي
 وَضَعَهُ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ .

(2) Ibn Taimiyyah: Taqī al-Dīn, Abū al-‘Abbās, Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, 661-728 A.H./1262-1327 A.D.

Ibn Taimiyyah was born at al-Ḥarrān in 661 A.H./1262 A.D. But he was brought to Damascus, together with his two brothers, by his father in the year 667 A.H./1268 A.D. when he was only six years of age. Unlike Ibn Khallikān, who was a product of partly Ayyūbid and partly Mamlūk periods, Ibn Taimiyyah's birth is in the Mamlūk period. Although according to al-Dhahabī, Ibn Taimiyyah's written works exceed five hundred, not even one-tenth of that seems to be extant or traceable. However, one of his noted works called Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah, which he wrote in four great volumes and which was written in refutation of the Shī‘ites and the Qadriyites as the title Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nawbawīyah fī rad al-Shī‘a wa al-Qadariyyah, specifies, is the case in point. At one point in the book¹ he turns to Nahj al-Balāgha and remarks:

As for transmitting of the transmitter from ‘Alī the sentence: "Abū Quḥafah [Abū Bakr, the second Caliph] has worn the caliphate like a shirt knowing full well that I am, in relation to it, like the pivot to a mill [q.v. Sermon No. 3, part one of Nahj al-Balāgha]." So we say where is the isnād

1. Ibn Taimiyyah, Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah, vol. 4, (Bulaq, 1904), p. 24.

of this narration in the way in which a tradition is transmitted from one thiqah [trustworthy^{person}] to the other without the chain being broken? This is not found ever!

A tradition of this sort is found only in Nahj al-Balāgha and the books like it.

The learned know that the majority of the Sermons of this book is a forgery ^{attributed to} on 'Alī and therefore, most of it is not found in the earlier books. Nor has it the isnād

which is well known. So all this which this man has transmitted where does he transmit it from? But these Sermons are like the one who claims to be an 'Alid or 'Abbāsīd without ^{cut} ~~our~~ knowing that none of his ancestors laid claims to such genealogy or a claim of this nature was made for him by someone else.

And thus we know his lie. For a genealogy is known with its roots before it reaches its branches. The same thing is equally applicable to the material related and transmitted that it should be proven and known before it reaches us. So if a man wrote a book mentioning many of the speeches of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī although no one before him had reported those speeches with the known isnād, we shall know with certainty that it was a lie. In

these speeches there are many matters the contrary of which is known to us with certainty [at the very time and place] where we are. It is not for us to say that it was a lie. But sufficient it is for us to demand the proof of the soundness of the narration. For God does not make incumbent on His creation to testify anything which has not a positive proof on its truthfulness. In fact such testifying would be forbidden unanimously especially in view of the rule which forbids asking someone to perform some thing which is beyond his ability. [And asking to believe in such speeches as have been quoted] would be a greater act of asking to perform something beyond one's reach. How will it be possible to prove 'Alī's claim on Caliphate through a story attributed to him during the fourth century when the ^{forgeries about} ~~forgers~~ on him were many and when they had a government¹ which accepted whatever they said whether a truth or a lie with no one demanding from them a proof of the soundness of their narrations.

1. Reference to the Buwaihid government. Text reads:

2. أَمَّا نَقْلُ النَّاقِلِ عَنْهُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ لَقَدْ تَقَصَّصَهَا ابْنُ أَبِي قُحَّافَةَ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ
 أَن مَحَلِّي مِنْهَا مَحَلُّ الْقَطِيبِيِّ الرَّحِيٍّ فَنَقُولُ: أَيْسَرُ إِسْنَادُ هَذَا النَّقْلِ بِحَيْثُ
 يَنْقُلُهُ ثِقَةٌ عَنْ ثِقَةٍ مُتَّصِلًا إِلَيْهِ وَهَذَا أَلْبُودُ قَطِطٌ وَإِنَّمَا يَوْجَدُ مِثْلَ هَذَا فِي
 كِتَابِ "نَهْجِ الْبَلَاغَةِ" وَآمُشَايَهُ وَ أَهْلُ الْعِلْمِ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَ خُطَبِ

(3) Al-Dhahabī: Shams al-Dīn, Abū 'Abd Allāh, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, 673-748 A.H./1274-1347 A.D.

Al-Dhahabī is yet another renowned scholar of the Syrian school of the Mamlūk period. His Tarīkh al-Islām, which he wrote in twenty-one volumes is regarded as one of the standard works in the field of history and has served as the major source for Taghrī Bardī (813-874 A.H./1410-1469 A.D.) in his history of the kings of Miṣr and al-Qāhirah. For the first three centuries he bases his history more or less on al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H./922 A.D.) yet there are some useful additions. As well as writing his own history he wrote compendiums to some of the important historical works existing at his time like Tarīkh Dimashq of Ibn 'Asākir, Tarīkh Baghdād of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and, in the field of traditions, on al-Sunan of al-Baihaqi. But it is in the Islamic science of

Continuation of Ibn Taimiyyah's text:

هَذَا الْكِتَابُ مُفْتَرَاةٌ عَلَيَّ عَلَيَّ وَلِهَذَا لَا يُوجَدُ غَالِبَهَا فِي كِتَابٍ
مُتَقَدِّمٍ وَلَا لَهَا إِسْنَادٌ مَعْرُوفٌ فَهَذَا الَّذِي تَقْلَعَهَا مِنْ أَيْنَ تَقْلَعَهَا؟
وَلَكِنْ هَذِهِ الْخُطْبُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ مَنْ يَدْعِي أَنَّهُ عَلَوِيٌّ أَوْ عَبَّاسِيٌّ وَلَا نَعْلَمُ أَحَدًا
مِنْ سَلَفِهِ إِدْعَى ذَٰلِكَ قَطُّ وَلَا أَدْعِي ذَٰلِكَ لَهُ فَنَعْلَمُ كَذِبَهُ فَإِنَّ النِّسْبَ
بِكَوْنٍ مَعْرُوفًا مِنْ أَصْلِهِ حَتَّى يَنْتَهِلَ بِفَرْعِهِ وَكَذَٰلِكَ الْمَنْقُولَاتُ لَا بُدَّ أَنْ
تَكُونَ شَأْنًا مَعْرُوفَةً عَمَّنْ نَقَلَ عَنْهُ حَتَّى يَنْتَهِلَ بِهَا فَإِذَا صَنَفَ وَاحِدٌ
كِتَابًا ذَكَرَ فِيهِ خُطْبًا كَثِيرَةً لِلنَّبِيِّ وَأَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ وَعُثْمَانُ وَعَلِيٌّ وَلَمْ
يَرِدْ أَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ تِلْكَ الْخُطْبُ قَبْلَهُ بِإِسْنَادٍ مَعْرُوفٍ عَلَيْنَا يَقِينًا عَلَيَّ مَا
بُنِيَ قِصَصُهَا وَنَحْنُ فِي هَذَا الْمَقَامِ وَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نُبَيِّنَ أَنَّ هَذَا كَذِبٌ بَلْ
يَكْفِينَا الْمَطَالِبَةُ بِصِحَّةِ النُّقْلِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يُوجِبْ عَلَيَّ الْخَلْقَ أَنْ يُصَدِّقُوا
بِمَا لَمْ تَقُمْ لَهُ دَلِيلٌ عَلَيَّ صَوِّهِ بَلْ هَذَا مُمْتَنِعٌ بِاتِّفَاقٍ لِأَسْمَاءِ عَلَيَّ الْقَوْلِ
بِامْتِنَانٍ عَظِيمٍ مَا لَا يُطَاقُ فَإِنَّ هَذَا مِنْ أَعْظَمِ تَكْلِيفٍ مَا لَا يُطَاقُ فَكَيْفَ
يُمْكِنُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُشَبَّهَ إِدْعَاءُ عَلَيَّ الْخِلَافَةَ بِمِثْلِ حِكَايَةِ ذِكْرَتِهِ عَنْهُ فِي
أَتْنَاءِ مِائَةِ الرَّابِعَةِ لَمَّا كَثُرَ الْكَاذِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ وَ صَارَ لَهُمْ دَوْلَةٌ تَقْبَلُ مِنْهُمْ
مَا يَقُولُونَ سَوَاءَ كَانَ صِدْقًا أَوْ كَذِبًا وَ لَيْسَ عِنْدَهُمْ مَنْ يُطَالِبُهُمْ بِصِحَّةِ
النُّقْلِ

al-Rijāl that he became best known. His works in the field of al-Rijāl are known as Tahdhīb al-Rijāl, Tabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz, Tabaqāt al-Mashāhīr al-Qurrā', al-Tajrīd fī Asmā' al-Ṣaḥābah and Mīzān al-I'tidāl. In his work, Mīzān al-I'tidāl he refers to Nahj al-Balāgha when writing the following biographical note on al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā:

'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain al-'Alawī, al-Ḥusainī, al-Sharīf, al-Murtaḍā. The scholastic theologian, the Rāfidite, the Mu'tazilite. Author of many books. Took his traditions from Sahl al-Dībājī and al-Marzubānī and others. He was assigned the niqābah of the 'Alids and he died in the year 436 [A.H./ 1044 A.D.]. He has been accused of inventing Nahj al-Balāgha. His contribution to the [Islamic] sciences is quite considerable. One who has read his book Nahj al-Balāgha knows for sure that it was fabricated and attributed to amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī, may God be pleased with him. Because there is in it the patent curse on and the degradation of, the two leaders, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, may God be pleased with both of them. In the book there are also contradictory matters and things of lowliness which, for someone who really knows the psychological make-up

of the Qurashite Companions and of those others who came after them and who belonged to the later period, make it certain that the most of the book is untrue.¹

(4) al-Ṣafadī: Ṣalāh al-Dīn, Khalīl ibn Aibak

Al-Ṣafadī was born in 697 A.H./1297 A.D. and died at Damascus in 764 A.H./1362 A.D. He was a Turk who probably spoke Turkish at home, but rose to a position where it became possible for him to offer himself to lecture at the great mosque of the Umayyads (al-Jāmi' al-Umawī) at Damascus where only the privileged and the top scholars were allowed to do so. H. Ritter says that he was a pupil of al-Shihāb Maḥmūd, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, Ibn Nubāta and Abū Hayyān.² Three years older than Ibn Kathīr (700-774 A.H./1300-1372 A.D.), the author of the history known as al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, he is ^{said} ~~said~~ to have taken from him too. Ibn 'Imād quotes al-Dhahabī as saying:

al-Dhahabī's text reads:

عَلِيّ ابْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ الْعَلَوِي الْحُسَيْنِي الشَّرِيفِ الْمُرْتَضَى الْمُتَكَلِّمُ الرَّافِضِيُّ 1
الْمُعْتَزِلِيُّ صَاحِبُ التَّصَانِيفِ حَدَّثَنِي سَهْلُ الدِّيبَاجِيِّ وَالْمَرْزُبَانِيُّ وَغَيْرُهُمَا
وَوَلِيَّ النِّقَاطَةِ الْعَلَوِيَّةِ وَمَاتَ سَنَةَ سِتَّةٍ وَثَلَاثِينَ أَرْبَعِمِائَةً عَنْ إِحْدَى وَثَمَانِينَ
سَنَةً وَهُوَ الْمَتَّعُ بِوَضْعِ نَهْجِ الْبَلَاغَةِ وَلَهُ مُشَارِكَةٌ قَوِيَّةٌ فِي الْعِلْمِ وَمَنْ طَالَعَ كِتَابَهُ
نَهَجَ الْبَلَاغَةَ جَزَمَ بِأَنَّهُ مَكْدُونٌ وَعَلِيٌّ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيُّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ فِيهِ السَّبْ
الصِّرَاحُ وَالْحَقُّ عَلَى سَيِّدَيْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا وَفِيهِ مِنَ التَّنَاقُضِ
وَالْإِشْبَاعِ الرُّكْبَانِ وَالْعِبَارَاتِ الَّتِي مِنْ لَهْ مَعْرِفَةِ بِنَفْسِ الْقُرَشِيِّينَ مِنْ
الصَّحَابَةِ وَبِنَفْسِ غَيْرِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنَ الْمَتَأَخِّرِينَ جَزَمَ بِأَنَّ الْكِتَابَ أَكْثَرُهُ بَاطِلٌ

2. H. Ritter, Preface to al-Wafayāt al-A'yān (Istanbul, 1931), p. "h".

Al-Ṣafadī is: al-Imām [the spiritual leader], al-ʿĀlīm [the knowledgeable], al-Adīb [man of literature], al-Balīgh [the rhetorician], al-Akmal [the most accomplished]. He sought knowledge and elevated himself to share the distinction and leadership in his vocation. He studied the [Islamic] science of al-Ḥadīth and the books which are related to that science.

Then al-Dhahabī goes on to admit that while he had been the source for some of al-Ṣafadī's traditions, the latter was a source for some of his.¹ H. Ritter quotes Ibn Kathīr in stating that al-Ṣafadī wrote about two hundred books² but Ibn ʿImād's information is perhaps more dependable because he says: "I came across an autobiographical note by al-Ṣafadī which was written in two quires [of paper] and in which he had mentioned his early life stories, the names of his tutors [al-Mashā'ikh], and the names of the books he had written." Those books, says Ibn ʿImād, were about fifty some of which he had completed and some of which he had not.³ In his work, al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt, the work for which he is most remembered, he refers to Nahj al-Balāgha. And for the first time a break

-
1. Ibn ʿImād, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, vol. 1v (Bulaq, 1932), p. 200.
 2. H. Ritter, op. cit.
 3. Ibn ʿImād, op. cit.

with the traditional Mamlūk School is noticeable. Firstly, he mentions the book under the biographical note on al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and not under al-Sharīf al-Murtadā as the previous three scholars had done. Then he lists al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's other books in fuller detail than Ibn Khallikān, or al-Dhahabī. But he joins the rest of the Mamlūk School in the question of the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha and remarks:

People think that Nahj al-Balāgha was written by him. But I have heard al-Shaikh, al-Imām, al-'Allāmah, Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taimīyyah say that it was not so. But what there was in it from the speeches of 'Alī was well known and what there was in it from the compositions of al-Raḍī was well known too. Or words to that effect.¹

(4) al-Yāfi'ī: 'Abd Allāh ibn Asad, Abū Muhammad,
d. 768 A.H./1366 A.D.

Although al-Yāfi'ī was born (c 700 A.H./1300 A.D.) in the South of the Arabian Peninsula and belonged to a

1. Al-Ṣafadī, Al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1949), p. 374.

branch of Ḥimyarite tribe of Yaman, he, having received his early education in Aden, proceeded to Mecca and there settled down for good. Given to literature and poetry, he also wrote a biographical history and called it Mir'āt al-Jinān wa 'ibrat al-Yaqzān. I have classed him with the Scholars of the Mamlūk Dynasty, despite his Yamanite origin and later, Meccan residence, for in the reign of the Sultan Baybars, when al-Yāfi'ī was writing his history, al-Ḥijāz was firmly controlled by the Mamlūk Sultan. And so, it seems, the viewpoints of his scholars. It is noteworthy that his comments on Nahj al-Balāgha which he makes in the third volume of his history, are composed of the very same words enunciated by Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī.¹ I refrain from quoting his text as the only new point he introduces into it is his observation that there was thirty years of difference between the deaths of the two brothers, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and al-Sharīf al-Murtadā. However, his quoting Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī's words in his history proves that he shared their views as far as the book Nahj al-Balāgha was concerned.

(5) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī: Ahmad ibn 'Alī

Ahmad ibn 'Alī better known as Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī was born in 773 A.H./1371 A.D. in one of the southern parts of the old Egypt called al-'Asqalān. Although he

1. al-Yāfi'ī, Mir'āt al-Jinān (Hyderabad, 1919), p. 56.

visited Syria, and lived there for some times, and also he visited the Hijāz, but it was Egypt where he lived most of his time and where he died in 852 A.H./1448 A.D. But he is very much the product of the Syrian School as his many works based on al-Dhahabī's earlier works show. In volume four of his Lisān al-Mizān, Ibn Hajar turns to Nahj al-Balāgha and gives it the treatment of Ibn Khallikān and al-Dhahabī. In fact, Ibn Hajar's comments are the repetition of al-Dhahabī's words¹ and therefore, need not be quoted here. But like al-Yāfi'ī, Ibn Hajar's entry does signify the views he held of Nahj al-Balāgha.

These are then, the principal doubts expressed by the Medieval Islamic writers on Nahj al-Balāgha. And all are the product of the Mamlūk Dynasty. In the first Chapter we considered the questions as to why people were interested in 'Alī's speeches and what made al-Radī collect Nahj al-Balāgha. Here, at this point, it would be appropriate to reflect on certain features of criticism of it.

Following the progress of the criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha the reader must have noticed the pronounced weakness of the Muslim scholars in the Middle Ages in that once a tradition, an interpretation, a viewpoint is recorded by one recognised and popular scholar, it is carried through by the following erudites without carrying

1. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Lisān al-Mizān, vol. 4 (Hyderabad, 1912), p. 223.

out their own researches. Many of the Muslim scholars have been credited with literally scores of works, as we have just seen and there are other cases like al-Suyūṭī, where the numbers of works produced are staggering. But originality still remained a rare commodity and that was entirely due to the lack of independent research. None of the aforesaid Mamlūk scholars made a thorough investigation on the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha and all of them merely repeated the view which was first expressed by Ibn Khallikān in c 654 A.H./1256 A.D.. In other words, two and a half centuries after Nahj al-Balāgha had been compiled.

The second factor which ought to be considered is the political background of the criticism. Ibn Khallikān's birth, early training, and even what is termed as "the intellectual maturity" took place under the Ayyūbid Dynasty. A Dynasty which was wrested by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (566-589 A.H./1170-1193 A.D.) from the Faṭimid Caliphs of Egypt, which was a dynasty whose religion, in Ibn Kahllikān's own words, "was Imāmite". It was founded in 297 A.H./909 A.D. and it had ruled for 208 years over North Africa, Egypt, Syria and even in al-Ḥijāz. The size of the Faṭimid domain fluctuated but the 'Abbāsids Caliphs never, in their best days, had a greater rival. The last Faṭimid Caliph, al-'Ādid (55-567 A.H./1160-1170 A.D.) had made Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's uncle, his Chief Minister, in 565 A.H./1169 A.D. Upon his death, the office was assumed by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. It was a matter of

regret even to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn that while the ailing master, the Faṭimid Caliph, was still alive, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn let the caliphate of the 'Abbāsids be declared on the pulpits of Miṣr and Cairo.¹ The motive which may have prompted Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was not power, for he already had it, but the fact that the Caliph in Baghdad was the head of the orthodoxy whereas the Faṭimid was not. But it was more for political reasons than religious that a campaign against Shī'ism was launched. Not perhaps, against religion or its doctrines which in certain respects, differed from the orthodoxy, but because it happened to be the religion of the state and the people who must now be discredited.

When Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn became the master of Egypt and its dependencies [writes Ibn Khallikān] there were no schools. For the previous government had been Imāmite by religion and they did not believe in these matters [i.e. the tenets of Sunnite orthodoxy] and so the Sultān built one school at al-Qarāqah al-sughra, the other near the mausoleum attributed to al-Ḥusain. He made the house of Sa'īd al-Su'adā', a servant of the Faṭimid Caliphs, as the residence quarters

1. Taghrī Bardī, Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, vol. 5 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 356.

[khānqāh] for the students, making a trust for its maintenance. He created likewise trusts for the maintenance of all the schools he built. He made the house of 'Abbās, the minister to the Faṭimid Caliph, as the School for the propagation and the teaching of the Ḥanafite Sect. This school is in Cairo. He also built a school for the Shāfi'ites and this is known as Zain al-Tujjār, creating a trust for its maintenance also . . .¹

Now it will be noted that when Ibn Khallikān said that there were no schools, he must have meant that there were no schools to teach Ḥanafi or Shāfi'i doctrines and the matters associated with them. How much truth the statement contains, is the matter for scholars to investigate for themselves. My purpose in rendering the above quotation is to establish the pattern. The fact that the two hundred years or so which intervene between Ibn Khallikān and Taghrī Bardī had not changed the attitude of the Mamlūk intellectuals, is illustrated by the report the latter's history contains and which is as follows: Reporting the death of al-Sharīf Qatādah ibn Idrīs in 617 A.H./1220 A.D., the historian says:

1. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 54.

In this year al-Sharīf Qatādah ibn Idrīs Abū 'Azīz al-Ḥusainī al-Makkī, the Amīr of Mecca died. He was learned, just, and and it was noted that during his term of office the highways were secured for pilgrims as were their lives and their belongings. He used to say the adhān himself reciting "Ḥayyā 'alā Khair al-'amal" in it as the Shī'ahs do. He was beyond casting gain-seeking eyes on anyone. Never did he tread the caliphal carpet nor did he call on anyone else. Gold and precious garments used to be carried to him from Baghdad every year. He used to say that I am more worthy for Caliphate than al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh. He never committed a major sin [al-Kabīrah] in his life. [Taghrī Bardī remarks] I say what sin is greater than al-rafd [Shī'ism], and cursing of the Companions!¹

That was the policy of discrediting the Faṭimids, in particular, and the Shī'ites in general. But there was also the desire to shift the seat of Caliphate and intellectual activities to Syria and Egypt. When, in 648 A.H./1250 A.D. Hulāgū conquered Baghdad and had the Caliph, al-Musta'ṣim and his officials killed, the fourth

1. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 249-50.

Mamlūk Sulṭān, Baybers (658-676/1259-1277 A.D.), who had appointed Ibn Khallikān as the Qaḍī al-Qudāt in Syria, lost no time to exploit the situation as Sir William Muir records:

Shortly after his accession to throne, Beibers hearing that a scion of 'Abbāsīd descent survived in Syria, conceived the design of setting him up as Caliph, and of receiving at his hands a spiritual blessing and title to the Sultanate. Sought out from his hiding, the Abbāsīd was brought to Cairo. At his approach, the Sulṭān with his court went forth in pomp to meet him. Even the Jews and Christians had to follow in the train, bearing the Book of the law, and the Evangel, in their hands. Soon after this, Mustanṣir Caliph-nominate, robed in gorgeous apparel, girt with the sword of State and mounted on a white steed, was installed in the office, and sworn fealty to by Beibers, his Ameers, and the people; which function ended, there was read from the pulpit a pompous patent by the Caliph, conferring on Beibers the sovereign title, and impressing upon him the duty of warring for the Faith, and other obligations which Mustanṣir now devolved on him. Then with sound of trumpet and shouts of joy, the royal procession

wended its way through the streets back to the palace; -- The Caliph following the Sultān on horseback, the rest on foot.¹

This was the climax or the royal manifestation of the simmering ambition on the part of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Sultans to make their domain as the intellectual and material centre of Islam. Baghdad had enjoyed an unchallenged intellectual monopoly for five hundred years and the Baghdadis were proud of it. In fact, when in the early fourth century, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih produced his al-'Iqd al-Farid and it reached from Spain to Baghdad, Ṣāhib ibn 'Abbād, after examining it exclaimed: "hādhihī bidā'atunā ruddat ilainā" (i.e. these are our own goods returned to us!). Now, in the seventh century, a book like Nahj al-Balāgha, which was Baghdadi in compilation and Shī'ite in sympathy, had little prospects in prospering in the lands of the Mamlūks.

But the third, and perhaps more important historical factor lies in the rivalry of the two powers. The Mongols who had destroyed Baghdad and its 'Abbāsīd empire, had now settled in Iran. They had become deadlier. For they had embraced Islam. But the kind of Islam they had adopted bore distinctly the Shī'ite stamp. The great-grandson of Hulāgū, Ghazan Maḥmūd (695-704/1295-1304 A.D.) was the patron

1. Sir William Muir, The Caliphate (London, 1891), p. 587-8.

of Ḥasan ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726 A.H./1325 A.D.) whose book, Minhāj al-karāmah aroused the anger of no other than the Mamlūk's spiritual leader Ibn Taimiyyah. And the remarks of Ibn Taimiyyah on Nahj al-Balāgha which the reader has already noted, are contained in the book specifically written in refutation of al-Ḥillī's book. Thus if Ibn Khallikān's comments are seen in the context of that power struggle between the Mamlūk and Mongol empires, the validity and impartiality of them becomes less credible.

But judging on its own merits, the Mamlūk Criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha cannot altogether, be rejected. There is no isnād mentioned in Nahj al-Balāgha before any of the sermons or the sayings attributed to 'Alī. And isnād was the only yardstick with which the medieval scholars used to measure the early traditions. To this extent Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism seems to be sustainable. It is also curious that at the time of Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism, some of the prominent Shī'ite writers, like Ḥasan ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī himself, were alive and could have attempted to attend to it and supply the required isnād. Particularly when Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism revolved around one sermon, i.e. the sermon which has been named al-shiqshiqiyyah. But his demand for isnād would be applicable to each and every entry in Nahj al-Balāgha.

Group II, Modern Criticism

(a) the Western Scholars on Nahj al-Balāgha

(1) Carl Brockelmann: In his ^{bibliographical survey} ~~encyclopaedia~~ of Arabic literature, Carol Brockelmann, as Ibn Khallikān and those who followed him, mentions Nahj al-Balāgha together with other compositions of al-Sharīf al-Murtadā. His words are as follows:

Nahj al-balāga angebliche Aussprüche 'Alī's von einigen und so meist in Yemen . . . seinem Bruder as-Sarīf ar-Radī . . . zugeschrieben, ohne dass die Autorschaft des einen oder das andere mit entscheidenden Argumenten bewiesen werden konnte, wenn nicht des Schweigen at-Tusi's als solches gelten soll . . . , auch bei den Isma'iliten viel gebraucht . . .¹

(2) Clement Huart:

Amongst the Imamites, the Sharīf al-Murtadā, whose name was Abu'l Qāsim Alī Ibn Ṭahir [sic!] the descendant of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (966-1044) held the post of inspector (q.v. the footnotes)

1. Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen literatur, Supp., pp. 704-5.

of the 'Alid family [sic!] at Baghdad . . .
 He is also the author (unless it be his
 brother Radī) of Nahj al-Balāgha, a collection
 of sayings which he himself attributed to
 'Alī; the commentator Mustaqīm Zāde, has even
 asserted him to be the real author of the dīwān
 attributed to 'Alī, and this is by no means
 an impossibility.¹

(3) H. A. R. Gibb: Discussing the literary activities of
 the Buwaihid period, H. A. R. Gibb notes that they were
 mainly of religious and related topics. "The term," says
 Gibb, "would hardly cover the famous treatise on the
 Principles of Government by the qāḍī al-Māwardī (d. 1058),
 were it not that it is a programme for the ideal government
 of the theocratic state with but slight concessions to
 what the theologians regarded as the corrupt and illegal
 practice of the day." Between 945 and 1055 A.D. although
 the official religion remained Sunnite, the state was run
 by the Shi'ites and to this fact he points when Gibb says:

The Shi'ites, of course, made the most of
 their opportunity of open activity, and the
 bibliography of Shi'ite books composed by
 the jurist Muhammad at-Ṭūsi (d. 1067 A.D.) is

1. C. Huart, A History of Arabic Literature (London,
 1903), p. 253.

of interest as showing the volume of Shi'ite literature then existing that has since perished, the greatest part no doubt suppressed by the orthodox Sunnis. Somewhat before this, however, the Zaidi sect of the Shi'a had founded an independent state in the Yemen, which has maintained its existence to this day. In this secluded corner they produced a considerable literature whose monuments are only now being investigated and found to possess, in spite of their predominant theological contents, no little interest and value. Of the general literary work of the Shi'ites special interest attaches to the pseudographs attributed to the Prophet's son in law Ali, but written by two brothers, the Sharīfs (i.e. descendants of Ali) al-Murtaḍā (966-1044) and ar-Raḍī (970-1015), the latter of whom was one of the most noted poets of the day. These forgeries consist of a poetic dīwān and a work containing, under the title of The Highway of Eloquence, the supposed sermons and letters of Ali. The latter work, in particular, written in pleasing and not too ornate saj', has enjoyed a great reputation not only amongst the Shi'ites (who revere it as an authentic monument of their Imām) but also among Sunni Muslims.¹

1. H. A. R. Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1963), p. 98.

(b) Modern Egyptian School

(4) Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām

Writing about the early commentators of the Qur'ān, Aḥmad Amīn comes to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and comments:

The fourth personality is more difficult than can be imagined. The amount of exaggeration and lies that has entered into it is such that leaves a historian confused. And that personality is of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. For there is no other personality of the age which was so much the centre of disputes, in which both the lovers and the disinclined indulged in excesses and around which the creators placed their creations, and because of which religious sects came into being, as the one 'Alī possessed. They have narrated traditions of the Prophet through him which amount to six hundred and eighty-six and of which no more than fifty may be correct. They have ascribed to him a collection of poems [dīwān] and, according to al-Māzinī, 'Alī may not have composed more than two of the couplets . . . They have attributed to him all that there is in Nahj al-Balāgha although the critics both of the old times and the modern ones, like al-Ṣafadī and Huart [q.v.], have doubted it in its totality [shakka fi majmū'ihā]

[sic]. Those doubts spring from matters which are contained in some parts of it -- things like "rhymed prose" [al-saj'] and the "word craft" [ṣanā'at lafzīyā] which were not known to the time. As his saying: "Honour your clan for they are the wings you fly by and the roots to which you return." And then there are some of the expressions which could have been used only after the Greek Philosophy had been translated into Arabic and after the sciences had properly been recorded; [expressions like] "Repentance [al-Istighfār] comes for six different meanings and [al-Īmān] Faith stands on four pillars." And like that part in which the house has been defined and its four boundaries specified all of which is more in the style of sophisticated [al-mu'annaqīn] as his saying [defining the house of this world -- dār al-dunyā (as opposed to the house of the next world -- dār al-ākhirah)]: "The four boundaries that bound this house the first of which ends where the calamities are invited in . . ." and other expressions like it, so subtle and sophisticated in a style that was not known except in the 'Abbāsīd period as you see in the description of the peacock. As they have ascribed to him a book in the 'Ilm al-Jafr [divination] in which he mentions all that was

going to happen until the end of the world. The story of him teaching Abu 'l-Aswad al-Du'alī the foundations of the Nahw [grammar] is well known. All this makes it very difficult for the critical historian to describe his knowledgeable personality with a description he can be satisfied with as to what there is in Nahj al-Balāgha which belongs to 'Alī and what there is which does not. And which of the wise-sayings [al-ḥikam] and proverbs [al-amthāl] originates from him and which does not. And which of the traditions and the judgements said to have come down from him, and advice, he is said to have given to the Caliphs on sundry matters, is correct and which is not. All these matters are yet liable for discussion.¹

(c) The modern Iraqi School

(5) S. A. Khulusi, Islamic Review, October, 1950

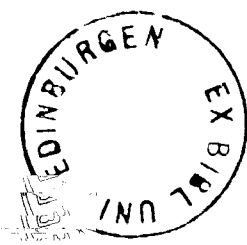
Under the article headed by "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha", Dr. Khulusī has made a number of points concerning the doubts in the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha most of which he derives from the sources already quoted. In line with the pattern of this chapter, however, it is perhaps not unsuitable to quote his own words:

1. Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1928), p. 179.

Reasons that the Nahj al-Balāgha in its present form is full of spurious matter. We do not deny that certain parts of the book are authentic, but the rest is spurious. We suspect the authenticity on the following grounds:

1. All the literary and historical works that appeared before the time of the two brothers al-Sharīf Raḍī and al-Sharīf Murtaḍā, who are regarded the compilers of the book, do not contain most of what is mentioned in the Nahj al-Balagha (See Ibn Taimiyya . . .) Even a man with a strong Shi'ite vein like Abul Faraj al-Isfahānī (897-967 C.E.) does not mention more than a few of Ali's short speeches.

2. The compilation of the speeches of any literary personage in the form of a book was quite unknown before the time of the Sharīfs, except in so far as concerned the sayings and the speeches of the Prophet. As for others, their sayings and speeches were to be found scattered in historical annals and books of literary miscellanies. Yet, what is preserved of the speeches of any of Ali's contemporaries does not equal one tenth of the Nahj al-Balāgha . . . It is claimed that 'Ali's speeches were, for the most part, memorised. There were people who knew four hundred and eighty of his speeches by heart . . . How is it then that speeches of



his contemporaries, of whom some had great authority and even greater number of followers, were not likewise memorised?

3. The detailed outlook of the subjects dealt with and the complex themes could not be safely attributed to 'Alī or his time. It is the work of a much later period and a more complex stage of civilisation.

4. The lengthy documents of the type exhibited by the Covenant of Ali with al-Ashtar . . . or the Speech of Shadow were unfamiliar to the Prophet or the Imams. Our suspicions of the Covenant of 'Alī are strengthened by the fact that the Imam had made similar covenants with other governors; yet, he had not made them so lengthy. Moreover, al-Ashtar was one of his intimate companions and his right arm in the battle of Ṣiffīn. He was in no need of such a lengthy covenant. Why did 'Alī not provide his other governors with similar ones? . . . It may be argued that such covenants were lost or not preserved wholly, and that the only one that had come down to us intact is that of al-Ashtar. Granted, but surely if it were genuine, it could not have been preserved in two different versions; for besides the version that we have in the Nahj al-Balagha, there has fortunately come down to us another version

that had been transcribed in 858 A.H. and was for sometime in the possession of the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II (died 1512 C.E.). This is not only shorter but is also different . . . Perhaps, if one day we chance to discover an earlier copy it will be still shorter, until we come to the original one, which was probably no more than a few lines, a thing which is to be expected since at 'Alī's time there was no paper (paper became available in the middle of the second century A.H.; see H. A. R. Gibb, *khawāṭir fi 'l-Adab al-'Arabī, al-Adab wa'l-Fann* 1943, 1, 2, p. 6), and what was written down ^{on} ~~in~~ skin and bones had to be greatly reduced in size and made succinct and to the point . . . Moreover, the language is so ornate that one is forced to believe that it is the work of a careful composer rather than that of a Caliph troubled by war and dissensions. Similarly, a comparison of speech NO 26 in the Nahj (vol 1 pp 63-66) with an earlier version of the same in Aghānī (vol xv p 45) will reveal that the former is a careful paraphrase of the latter. On comparing the Nahj as it stands in the Commentary of Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid with Muhammad 'Abduh's edition we found that the latter contained fifty extra pages! To return to the Covenant, it may be argued with full conviction

that it was fabricated in imitation of Ṭāhir Ibn al-Husain's Covenant to his son 'Abdullāh (206 A.H.), on the latter's appointment as Governor of Raqqa, Egypt, and the neighbouring districts . . . The similarity between the two covenants is striking!

5. The abusive language, cursings and revilings of the Companions, especially in the famous shiqshiqīyyā . . ., are not attributable to a pious and God-fearing Imam like 'Alī. He strongly resented the cursing of the Companions (See Ibn al-Jawzi, Talbīs Iblīs pp 106-108). He even praised 'Umar (Balādhurī, futūh al-Buldān . . . p 67, and Ibn Sallām, Kitab al-Awwal p 98).

6. The Ṣūfi touch of some of the speeches is characteristic of a later age than that of 'Alī.

7. The many variants of some of the speeches, even al-Sharīf al-Raḍī does not seem to be sure of the genuineness of certain parts of his compilation and admits that there are widely divergent versions of one and the same speech (cf. Majlisi's remark on one of Ali's speeches in Bihār al-Anwār vol XVII p 91 . . . "and this speech was produced by al-Kaf'amī with great variation), and that he had to include them all (Ibn Abi 'l-Hadīd, vol. 1 p. 17). Thus, for instance, al-Sharīf gives 'Alī's speech on Ṭalhā and Zubair in one place in ten lines

(the Nahj, vol 1 p 55), and in other in twelve lines (Ibid., vol ii pp 26-29). That the speeches had been tampered with is evident from the fact that sentences uttered at different occasions had been blended together and given as one speech. Now, speech NO 36, for instance, is composed of four separate parts (vol 1, pp. 84-85). In the third piece there is even a sentence from one of 'Umar's speeches (See Ibn Rashīq, al-'Umda vol 1 p 170, the wording is slightly different).

8. The neo-phraseology and the linguistic mistakes that could not have been committed by the Imam, or even by the people of his time, because those phrases and mistakes appeared at a much later period. The following are some of the mistakes and neologies occurring in the Nahj:

(i) Kayyafa: to modify . . . The derivation of a verb from the indeclinable word kayf was quite unknown at 'Alī's time . . .

(ii) Ma'lūl: morbid. (Ḥadīd op cit p 203. Firuzabādī gives ma'lūlun and 'alīlun and forbids the use of ma'lūlun, (see Qamūs vol viii p 32).

(iii) Kaada 'an: to be on the point of (Ḥadīd op cit vol 1 pp 270, 480), the verb kaada is normally used without 'an. It is used in the Quran as such (see 'ilmī Zada's Fath al-Rahmān li ṭālib āyāt al-Qurān p 423).

(iv) iltaqā bi: to meet (Ḥadīd vol ii p 62). iltaqa does not take the preposition bi.

(v) Mu'takif: devoted to prayers in a reclusive manner. It is used only in a religious sense. But the Nahj uses it in the sense of applying oneself to anything assiduously, in which case the kindred word 'Ākif is the correct one.

(vi) The preposition ka is incorrectly used with a pronoun in the following phrase: innī lastu ka-anta, I am not like you (Hadid vol 1 p 449).

Apart from these mistakes the Nahj contains words which were not known at 'Alī's time, such as: Tarhīb, to frighten; azalī, eternal (according to the author of Shifā' al-Ghalīl, azal, azalī, azaliyya are all wrong. They have never been used by the Arabs in their speech (see Shifā p 32). Similarly the words kammīyya, quantity and talāshī, annihilation, were not known to the Arabs (see Jamīl Sultān, Etudes sur Nahj al-Balagha, Paris 1940, pp 32-33). The phrase: ". . . he who is contented with God on the garment of Jabriyya" (Hadid vol iii part 13, p 225), could not have been used by 'Alī as the Jabriyya did not appear in his time. Still another phrase occurring in the following sentence claims one's attention: "fa-yā 'ajaba bayna huwa yastaqīluhā fī hayātihi, idh 'aqadahā li-ākharā ba'da wafātihi [la-shadda ma tashattarā

dhra'aiha], fasayyarāhā fī hawzatin kashnaa
yaghluzu kalimuha . . . (Ḥadīd vol 1 p 54, Nahj
 MS NO 2423 Paris fol 13a). Translated into
 English it reads: "I wonder at him (i.e. Abu
 Bakr), for while he resigned it (i.e. the
 Caliphate) in his lifetime, behold! he handed
 it over to someone else (i.e. 'Umar) on his
 death. [How eagerly they shared its udder]
 (he is comparing Caliphate to a cow whose udder
 was shared by Abū Bakr and 'Umar). So he
 rendered it to a man who was rough and whose
 speech was harsh." It is obvious that the use
 of the fa of consequence or fa al-sababiyya in
 the last sentence shows that it was originally
 linked up directly with the first one and that
 the middle part, marked in square brackets, was
 dragged in forcibly by a forger.¹

(d) Syrian School

(6) Jamil Sultan, Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha, Paris, 1940

In the foregoing quotation from Dr. Khulūsī, I have
 quoted all the grounds on which to him, the authenticity
 of Nahj al-Balāgha was suspected, and as they were rendered
 by the said author. But there was another reason namely,

1. Ṣafā' Khulūsī, "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balagha",
 article published in the Islamic Review, October,
 1950, pp. 31-35.

that the above quotation has so much of Jamil Sultan's Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha which make the points enumerated above serve a double purpose i.e. to voice the opinions of two different authors expressed in two different languages. The views expressed by Dr. Khulūsī on (1) the detailed outlook of the subjects dealt with and the complex themes, (2) the Covenant of al-Ashtar, (3) the language, (4) the Sufi touch, (5) al-Khafājī's comments concerning the words azalī, azalīyyā, etc., are strikingly similar with Jamil Sultan's. The remark that "On comparing the Nahj as it stands in the commentary of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd with Muhammad 'Abduh's edition we found that the latter contained fifty extra pages", is also made by Jamil Sultan.¹

The reader would have observed that most of the modern criticism is based on the works of the Mamlūk scholars, like Ibn Khallikān, al-Dhahabī and others all of whom have already been quoted and discussed. However, there are some new areas, based on style, vocabulary and the history of ideas, which have been brought to focus by Aḥmad Amīn, Khulūsī and Jamil Sultān. As in the following Chapters, I shall be discussing these, there is no need to mention them here.

1. Jamīl Sultān, Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha (Paris, 1940).

B. Commentaries on Nahj al-Balāgha

The impact of a book on the intellectual community used to be measured, up until modern times, in terms of the number of commentaries made upon it. The Qur'ānic commentaries, that of al-Ṭabarī, al-Bayḍāwī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Ṭabarsī, to name only the famous few, are reminders to the outside world of the influence and the veneration the revealed book has enjoyed amongst the Muslim community. The commentaries on Nahj al-Balāgha which exceed the hundred mark and which have been done in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, are also indicative of both its calibre and the mark it has made upon the successive generations since the early fifth century of the Islamic era. Of those commentaries I have only selected some of the most important.

1. A'lām Nahj al-Balagha: Written by 'Alī Ibn Nāṣir, who was a contemporary of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. "The oldest of the commentaries and comments," writes al-Kintūrī, "made on Nahj al-Balagha. The most dependable, the most sound, and the most precise of them all. It begins: "al-ḥamd li-allāh al-ladhī najānā min mahāwī al-ghaī wa zulūmātih wa hadānā sabīl al-ḥaqbi ayāt ayātih, etc.¹ Two copies of this commentary survive. One in the library of Tehran University. The other in the private library of Muḥammad Husain Kāshf al-Ghiṭā' at Baghdad. The manuscript

1. Al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Hujub wa al-Astār (Calcutta, 1912), p. 253.

is numbered 848 and at the end it reads: "This copy was compared with the one dated 700 A.H. and read over. The manuscript is dated 901 i.e. 1495 A.D."¹

2. Ma'ārif Nahj al-Balāgha: Written by Ali ibn Zaid al-Baihaqī. A prolific writer of his time Yāqūt quotes the writer as saying that he composed the commentary in one volume. Al-Baihaqī died 565 i.e. 1169 A.D. In the beginning of this commentary he points out that he was writing it on the request of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Khawnaqī who had also asked him to dedicate it to 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Naisāpūrī. As he calls the latter malik al-nuqabā' it appears that 'Alī ibn Muḥammad must have been a "naqib" himself, the designation which was held by the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha at his time. And that al-niqābah had still been in existence as an office and designation.²

3. Minhāj al-Barā'a: This commentary, written by Sa'īd ibn Hibat Allah better known as Quṭb al-Rāwandī, is the only one cited by Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd. In fact he is specific in the remarks he makes about al-Rāwandī's commentary saying that as far as he knew no other commentary existed.³ However, when he does refer to this commentary, Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd is often, critical of the comments and the

-
1. 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, (Beirut, 1975), pp. 203-4.
 2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. 5 (Cairo, 1934), p. 211.
 3. Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), p. 5.

explanations of al-Rāwandī. This in turn, aroused the partisan feelings in some of the Shi'ite scholars who composed books the main object of which was little else apart from refutation of Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd. Works like Salāsil al-ḥadīd litaq'īd ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd written by Shaikh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrainī who died in 1186 i.e. 1772 A.D. However, a copy of al-Rāwandī's commentary has been preserved by Imām Riḍā Library at Mashhad, Iran. Al-Rāwandī died in the year 573 A.H. i.e. 1177 A.D.

4. Commentary by Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar better known as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the celebrated author of the al-Tafsīr al-kabīr. 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf al-Qiftī, in his Ta'rīkh al-Ḥukamā' states that al-Rāzī was not able to complete his commentary on Nahj al-Balagha.¹ It is not known whether the work still exists. If it does, it should be of extreme value to the scholars. (Amongst other things, his comments and reactions to the sermon called al-shiqshiqiyya which has so much incensed Ibn Taymiyya and those who followed him.) Fakhr al-Din al-Razi died in the year 606 A.H. i.e. 1209 A.D.

5. Commentary: by 'Izz al-Dīn, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Muḥammad better known as Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. He was engaged in writing his commentary between the years 644 to 649 A.H. corresponding to 1246 to 1251 A.D. A comprehensive work which the author wrote in twenty volumes and which has been printed several times in Iran, Egypt and Lebanon. I refrain

1. al-Qiftī, Tarīkh al-Ḥukamā' (Leipzig, 1903), p. 293.

from giving a detailed description of this commentary in this intended "bird's-eye-view" of the commentaries, but permit me to indulge in the few "ifs". If by some device al-Mubarrad was persuaded to extend and Abu 'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī to restrain, if al-Mas'ūdī had lived long enough to cover down to the first quarter of the thirteenth century (of the Christian era), and Badī' al-Zamān had paid more attention to the simplicity and naturalness rather than the rhyming of his stylish language, the results would have been the work such as Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has produced. There is a method even in his deviations and purpose in his occasional fanaticism. His work may be devoid of the critical approaches but then this would be a blame and blemish, all the writers of the age, including I dare say, the commentators of the Qur'ān, will have to share. Indeed this element known to us as critical approach or analysis, was not thought of in those days and the light of the loyalties illuminated the shaded areas. One thing, however, which is very modern in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd is that he always gives his source when discussing a historical fact or presenting a debateable point. And thus some of the works which have been lost are still preserved, or at least partly preserved, in Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary. Works like Kitāb al-maqālāt by Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq (Muḥammad ibn Hārūn, died 868 A.D.) and Kitāb al-maqālāt by al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (active in the first half of the tenth century A.D.). Even for extant and available works, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary serves as an invaluable source

of reference. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, for example, reports that while carrying out his researches on Naṣr ibn Muẓāḥim's (died 212 A.H., i.e. 827 A.D.) Waq'at Siffīn (which was printed with his corrections and comment in 1945), he had one copy of the book available to him which was printed in Iran in 1883 and had a number of additions and omissions and printing mistakes. The other copy was printed in Beirut 1921, but the printers of the book had eliminated all the isnāds and therefore, from the research point of view that had no value. But the third "hidden" version which he was able to discover bit by bit and compare the aforesaid two with, was embedded in the commentary of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd.¹

On the issue of his religious beliefs, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has been a convenient target for both the major Islamic camps. His advocacy of the legitimacy of the orthodox caliphate, his defences of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, and his not altogether unjustifiable criticism of al-Rāwandī, all that brought wrath of the Shī'ites upon him. Their 'ulamā' (religious leaders) from time to time, have been directing their refutations and renunciations towards him. Perhaps, the first amongst them was Aḥmad ibn Mūsā (d. 677 A.H. i.e. 1278 A.D.), a brother to ^{Sayyid} ~~Sayyid~~ Ibn Ṭā'ūs. He was followed by Ḥāshim ibn Sulaymān al-Bahrainī (d. 1107 A.H. i.e. 1695 A.D.). The Silsilat al-Ḥadīd li-Taḥqīq Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd of

1. A. Salām, Waq'at al-Ṣiffīn (Qumm, 1962), Preface, p. 9.

Shaikh Yūsuf al-Bahrainī (who died 1186 A.H. i.e. 1772 A.D.) we have already noted. Shaikh Yūsuf was followed by Shaikh Ḥasan al-Bilādī who died in the year 1340 A.H. corresponding to 1921 A.D.

The Sunnites, on the other hand, seem not too willing to accept him. Whether their indifference has been based on Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's overt and al-rawāfid-like love for 'Alī or whether it stems from his not questioning al-shiqshiqīyya or some other contents of the book we shall never know. All we do know is that by the time Muṣṭafā ibn 'Abd Allāh, better known as Ḥājjī Khalīfa (b. 1017 A.H. i.e. 1608 A.D., d. 1081 A.H. i.e. 1670 A.D.), wrote his famous ^{literary}/encyclopedia Kashf al-Zunūn, he called him: "The poet, the writer, the Shī'ite."¹

However, there is no reason to doubt Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd's own statement that he was a Mu'tazilite belonging to the Baghdādī school which, while accepting the first three Caliphs who preceded 'Alī, held that he was on account of his faḍā'il (God-given and self-cultivated distinctions) superior to them. A view which was also held by Abū Ja'far al-Iskāfī, Abu 'l-Ḥusain al-Khayyāt, and Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī. The fact that Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was singled out and became the subject of a heated controversy is, in a way, a testimony to his outstanding work, his reverence for justice, his persistent desire to steer the middle course

1. Ḥājjī Khalīfah, Kashf al-Zunūn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1943), p. 1991.

and his scholarly approaches to often passion and prejudice tainted Islamic history. A point which may be of interest to the specialists of Islamic history is that the 'Abbāsid period which produced almost all the major and existing works ended with Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's work. As if he was chosen by destiny to have the last word!

6. Commentary by 'Alī ibn Maitham (Kamāl al-Dīn) al-Bahrainī. Said to be a ^{pupil} ~~disciple~~ of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 673 A.H./1274 A.D.) and therefore, it is not surprising that it is in the philosophical analysis and approaches that his commentary most distinguishes itself in. He is, perhaps, amongst the commentators of Nahj al-Balāgha what Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is amongst the commentators of the Qur'ān. Unlike Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary, to understand his commentary fully, one has to get acquainted with the Greek philosophy together with the Arabs' interpretation and adaptations of it. The differences of approach and methods between him and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd are at once visible. While the latter commences by giving brief life-sketches of the author, 'Alī, and the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, the former turns to "not who has spoken but what has been spoken". He observes what happens to the words and how their meanings change according to the conditions of usage. He discusses the technical components of kalām and identifies that which make it eloquent. Having illustrated when a word is used in its real (al-ḥaqīqī) meaning and when it is used metaphorically, he proceeds to describe the kinds and variations of metaphor. Similes abound in Nahj al-Balāgha,

'Alī ibn Maitham defines what a simile is and how many kinds it divides itself into. He answers the question: "What constitutes al-balāghah?" and goes on to discuss what elements of the part of speech make a kalām balīgh (i.e. oratorical). Al-Tawhīd constitutes one of 'Alī's favourite themes, 'Alī ibn Maitham explains the essence of and the degrees pertaining to it. He is in the regions of pure philosophy when he is investigating the senses (al-hawāṣṣ) both the obvious and the occult (al-zāhirah wa'l-bāṭinah). So is the case when he is engaged in defining "al-zulm" (injustice) and the variations of it.

It is not easy to pay a fitting complement to a work of this calibre. But the obvious virtue is that he wrote his commentary after Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's twenty-volume commentary, carving a new path and expressing his philosophical notions in simpler language than, say, Ḥasan ibn al-Muṭahhir al-Ḥillī who followed him. His work is universally acknowledged by the Shī'ite world. He died in the year 679 A.H./1280 A.D.

7. Commentary by Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abduh, the celebrated Egyptian judge, writer and reformer, and one of the leaders of the Muslim community of his day. In his commentary he is mainly engaged in explaining out-of-usage words and difficult phrases. However, he is, perhaps, more than anyone else, responsible for making Nahj al-Balāgha a talking point in the intellectual circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while refraining from entering the areas which remain divisive between the

Sunnites and the Shī'ites. This was perhaps the most advisable course at the time but the reader of his commentary would have gained enormously had he not been deprived of his valuable and historical judgements.

This brief survey of only seven commentaries, whereas they exceed the hundred mark, is obviously far from being exhaustive. It leaves out some of the other important commentaries, such as Hadāiq al-ḥaqā'iq of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Kaiderī (d. 576 A.H.), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha of Ḥusain ibn Shahāb al-Dīn al-Karkhī (d. 1076 A.H.), Bahjat al-ḥaqā'iq of Muḥammad ibn Abī Turāb al-Ispahānī (d. 100 A.H.), and, the modern amongst them, Minhāj al-Barā'a of Sayyid Ḥabīb Allāh al-Khū'ī (d. 1324 A.H.).¹

* * * * *

In the course of the chapter the two main attitudes towards Nahj al-Balāgha have been demonstrated. On the one hand the medieval Syrian school have rejected much of Nahj al-Balāgha and in this they have been followed by certain modern scholars. On the other hand, a considerable body of medieval scholarship, not all of it by any means Shī'ite, have accepted Nahj al-Balāgha as the genuine words of 'Alī

-
1. For further information see Kashf al-hujūb wa'l-astar of I'jāz Ḥusain al-Kanturī (Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1912); A'yān al-Shī'a of Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Amūlī (Damascus, 1935); al-Dharī'a ilā taṣanīf al-Shī'a of Aqa Buzurg Tehranī (Najaf, 1355 A.H.); al-Ghadīr of 'Abd al-Ḥusain al-Amīnī (Tehran, 1372 A.H.); Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha of Sayyid 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khatīb (Beirut, 1975, 2nd ed.).

ibn Abī Ṭālib. Again, there has been a tendency among some modern scholars, notably Muḥammad 'Abduh, to regard Nahj al-Balāgha as authentic. The attitude of Aḥmad Amīn expresses an intermediate viewpo[†]int. During the remainder of the thesis, there will be an attempt to get to grips with the actual text of Nahj al-Balāgha and by a process of analysis both historical and rational to draw some conclusions on the text.

CHAPTER III

EARLY SOURCES FOR NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

Unfortunately al-Sharīf al-Raḍī rarely cites the source from which he has taken a particular speech, letter or saying. As already noted this lack of isnād led to serious criticisms of the contents by such writers as Ibn Taimiyyah. As the earlier collections of the speeches of 'Alī have not survived, it is necessary to search through a whole range of writings to find the sources which al-Sharīf al-Raḍī may have used. The nature of the surviving literature and the difficulty of the task ensure that this compilation cannot be comprehensive. There are three major areas of Arabic literature where we might expect to find possible sources for Nahj al-Balāgha. They are: historical writings, works on rhetoric (balāghah) and works belonging to the corpus of traditional Shī'ite works. This search will not, of course, prove that the words in Nahj al-Balāgha are the words of 'Alī but it will help to give us some idea of the reliability of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and it may indicate that the speeches, or at least some of them, are very much earlier than al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

A. Historical writings

1. Al-Kitāb of Sulaim ibn Qais

This work is of both historical importance and religious importance, at least to the Shī'ites. For while in Sunnī traditional writings, the tradition must be traced back through an isnād to the Prophet, to the Shī'ites the door of the first-hand reporters remained open by virtue of their belief in the institution of Imamate and the fact that a tradition emanating, say, from 'Alī, their first Imam, was as authoritative as that of the Prophet. Hence the sentence which they boast from time to time in the books connected with Islamic jurisprudence, al-fiqh, and the basis of it, uṣūl al-fiqh, when introducing some of the authorities: lahū kitāb wa aṣl (i.e. he has written a book and an aṣl). By aṣl they mean the collection of the traditions heard by the author from the Imam.

Sulaim ibn Qais, who is said to have died ca. 90 A.H., has left such an aṣl known as the Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī. Probably the first reference to it which survives, comes from al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 A.H.) who, speaking of the Shī'ites and the Imams writes: "And their limiting the number of their Imams [to twelve] is according to what is mentioned by Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī in his book which has been related by Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh. [But] this tradition has not been related by anyone else apart from

Ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh."¹ Then came Ibn Nadīm (d. 380 A.H.), who described Sulaim as:

Among friends of the Commander of the Faithful, for whom there may be peace, there was Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī. As a fugitive from al-Ḥajjāj [ibn Yūsuf], who sought to kill him, he took refuge with Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh, who gave him shelter. When death drew near to him, he said to Abān: "I am indebted to you and now death is present with me. Oh, son of my brother, by the order of the Apostle of God, may Allāh bless him and give him peace, it is thus as described in my book." Then he gave him a book, which was the well-known book of Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī, from which Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh quoted, but which was not quoted by anyone else. Abān said in his narratives: "Qais was a Shaikh with me with an [inner] light which uplifted him." The first book to appear about the Shī'ah was the book of Sulaym ibn Qais al-Hilālī. Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh quoted it, but it was not quoted by anybody else.²

1. al-Mas'ūdī, al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf (Cairo, 1938), p. 198.

2. Ibn Nadīm, trans. Bayard Dodge, al-Fihrist, vol. I (New York, 1979), p. 535.

In the fifth century of the Hijrah the book of Sulaim ibn Qais was mentioned by Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 A.H.), adding (to what has already been said) that the book was also quoted by Ḥammād ibn 'Īsā through Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar from Sulaim ibn Qais.¹ As to whether it was the first ever book which came out from the Shī'ite sources, is disputed by the Shī'ites but Badr al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 769 A.H.) said it was.

The book seems to be in circulation when Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulainī was writing his Uṣūl al-Kāfī for he quotes it in several places² and so does Ibn Bā^awaih al-Qummī (d. 381/991) in his Kamāl al-Dīn.³ There have been various claims that this book is a later work, notably by Goldziher.⁴ However, no evidence has been presented to substantiate that claim.

Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilālī as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

<u>Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais</u>	cf.	<u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>
p. 100		No. 30, vol. 3, pp. 157.
p. 104		No. 208, vol. 2, pp. 214-16.

1. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 162.

2. al-Kulainī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī (Najaf, 1969), vol. 2, p. 57, p. 65, p. 131; vol. 6, p. 516, p. 546, etc.

3. Ibn Bāwaih al-Qummī, Kamāl al-Dīn (Tehran, 1395 A.H.), p. 262, p. 270, p. 274; traditions Nos. 9, 10, 15, 25, etc.

4. Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, vol. 2 (London, 1971), p. 24.

<u>Kitāb Sulaim ibn Qais</u>	cf. <u>Nahj al-Balāgha</u>
p. 125	No. 95, vol. 1, pp. 188-190.
p. 147	No. 56, vol. 1, pp. 100-1.
p. 156	No. 91, vol. 1, pp. 182-5.
p. 158	No. 91, vol. 1, p. 184.
p. 161	No. 457, vol. 3, p. 261.
p. 161	No. 42, vol. 1, pp. 88-89.
p. 162	No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.
p. 208	No. 17, vol. 3, pp. 18-20.
p. 238	No. 191, vol. 2, pp. 185-190. ¹

2. Abū Mikhnaf

Although no writings of the above writer survive as complete works, much of his writing survives in later historians. The work of Ursula Sezgin has established that most of these quotations must belong to him. Thus in the works of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī, and as we shall see in Naṣr b. Muzāhim's Waq'at Ṣiffīn, there are extensive passages from Abū Mikhnaf. In the lists appended to each work of the possible sources for the different speeches of Nahj al-Balāgha, the name of the second century rāwī, such as Abū Mikhnaf, will be included.

-
1. Number of pages of Sulaim b. Qais al-Hilālī's book (on the left) appear according to a recent edition of it which was printed at Qum (Iran) but unfortunately bears no date. Number of pages of Nahj al-Balāgha (shown on the right) are according to the al-Istiqamah Press, Cairo, edition but it too bears no date.

This means that the dating of parts of Nahj al-Balāgha must go back at least to his lifetime. He died between 157 and 170.

The authorities on tradition did not regard him as reliable, some even claiming that he was a Shī'ite.¹ Yet to the historians, as opposed to the traditionists, Abū Mikhnaḥ is very important. The two principal Islamic historians al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H.) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.) rely heavily on him. Ibn Nadīm (d. 380 A.H.) gives the following list of the books Abū Mikhnaḥ had written: "(1) Apostasy [al-riddah]; (2) The invasion of Syria; (3) The invasion of al-'Irāq; (4) Battle of the Camel; (5) Battle of Ṣiffīn; (6) The people of Nahrwān and the Khawārij; (7) Raids [al-Ghārāt] [early wars of Islam involving plunder]; (8) al-Ḥārith ibn Rashīd and the Banū Nājiyyā; (9) The assassination of 'Alī, for whom may there be peace; (10) The execution of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī; (11) The Slaying of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and of al-Ashtar and Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥudhayfah; (12) al-Shūrā and the assassination of 'Uthmān; (13) al-Mustawrid ibn 'Ullāfah; (14) The Slaying of Ḥusain, for whom may there be peace; (15) The death of Mu'āwiya, the reign of al-Yazīd, the battle of al-Ḥarrah and the fortifications of al-Zubair; (16) al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubaid; (17) Sulaymān ibn Surad and 'Ayn al-Wardah; (18) Marj Rahit, the election of Marwān and the slaying of Daḥḥāk ibn Qais; (19) Muṣ'ab and his province, al-'Irāq;

1. al-Dhahabī, Mīzān al-I'tidāl, vol. III (Cairo, 1963), p. 420.

(20) The Slaying of 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubair; (21) The slaying of Sa'id ibn al-'Āṣ; (22) The story of Yā Humairā and the slaying of ibn al-Ash'ath; (23) Bilāl al-Khārijī; (24) Najdah and Abū Fudayk; (25) The story of Azāriqa; (26) The story of Rustubādh; (27) Shabīb al-Harūrī and Ṣāliḥ ibn Musarraḥ; (28) Muṭarraḥ ibn al-Mughīrah; (29) al-Jamājim and the disposal of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ash'ath; (30) Yazīd ibn Muhallab and his murder at al-'Aqr; (31) Khālīd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qaṣrī and Yūsuf ibn 'Umar, the death of Hishām and the reign of Walīd ibn Yazīd; (32) Zaid ibn 'Alī, for whom be peace; (33) Yaḥyā ibn Zaid; (34) al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Khārijī."¹ Al-Najjāshī (d. 450 A.H.) adds two more works to the long list given by Ibn al-Nadīm, viz., Kitāb al-Saqīfah and Kitāb akhbār Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah.²

"He is," says al-Najjāshī, "the Shaikh [leader or mentor] of the traditionists at Kufah and the leader of the Kufans."³ Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 458 A.H.) reveals the general weakness amongst the early Muslim traditionists while speaking of Abū Mikhnaf, viz., the tendency in some of them of not regarding anachronism as something to be refrained from. "Al-Kashshī," says al-Ṭūsī, "describes him as one of the Companions of 'Alī and of his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain. The fact is that his father was one of the companions of

-
1. Ibn Nadīm, trans. Bayard Dodge, al-Fihrist, vol. I (New York, 1970), pp. 201-2.
 2. al-Najjāshī, al-Rijāl (Tehran, n.d.), p. 245.
 3. Ibid.

'Alī but as far as Abū Mikhnaf is concerned, he had never met him."¹ I suspect even this assertion of al-Ṭūsī that his father was a companion of 'Alī but would rather accept the statement of Ibn Shākir that his grandfather, Mikhnaf, may have been one.² As to whether Abū Mikhnaf was Shī'ite in the conventional sense, is contradicted by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd who describes him as: "A traditionist who believed that al-imāmah can be acquired [as opposed to the Shī'ite belief that it can only be bestowed by God, al-naṣṣ min Allāh.] He was not a Shī'ite nor has he been counted amongst their rijāl [accepted traditionists]."³ But perhaps Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was not aware of either of al-Najjāshī's views (quoted above), who also adds that Abū Mikhnaf related traditions from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imam of the Shī'ites⁴, or that of al-Ṭūsī, also quoted above. But I do tend to agree with what Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd states to be Abū Mikhnaf's view concerning the imām and imāmah. The fact that he wrote books both on the martyrdom of al-Ḥusain and Zaid ibn 'Alī side by side, tends to confirm that if Abū Mikhnaf was not a Zaidite, his sympathies were certainly with them.

Ibn al-Nadīm wrote: "I have read, what was written in the handwriting of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Khazzāz, that the

-
1. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 261.
 2. Ibn Shākir, Fuwāt al-Wafayāt, vol. II (Cairo, 1951), p. 288.
 3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, The Commentary, vol. I (Cairo, 1950), p. 147.
 4. al-Najjāshī, op. cit., p. 245.

scholars have said that Abū Mikhnaf excelled others in connection with al-‘Irāq, for its historical traditions and invasions; al-Madā’inī in connection with Khurāsān, India and Persia; al-Wāqidī in connection with al-Ḥijāz and the biography [of the Prophet]. They shared together in the knowledge of the invasion of Syria.”¹ This view has also been quoted by Yāqūt, who has certainly copied it from Ibn al-Nadīm.² However, it seems certain that the historians turned to Abū Mikhnaf when they had to render the accounts of historical events during the first one hundred and fifty years of the Hijrah. The list provided by Ibn al-Nadīm and quoted in this section, reveals that most of what Abū Mikhnaf had written was connected with al-‘Irāq; and a considerable part of that, directly or indirectly, connected with ‘Alī. Some of Abū Mikhnaf's works are claimed to survive, like the one circulating in Iraq, Iran, India and Pakistan, called Maqtal [of] Abū Mikhnaf. However, I consider the authenticity of this work together with any other which is claimed to exist separately and independently, to be of doubtful proposition.

However, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, when writing his commentary (between the years 645-649 A.H.) seems to have both al-Jamal and Ṣiffīn of Abū Mikhnaf; see his comments: "This sermon is not from the sermons of Ṣiffīn as al-Rāwindī mentions but it is from the sermons of al-Jamal, a great deal of

1. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 202.

2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, al-Irshād al-Arīb (Cairo, 1930), p. 221.

which has been quoted by Abū Mikhnaf."¹ When recording the War-Poetry (al-Arājīz) Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd remarks:

"These poems and the pieces of war-poetry have been quoted in totality by Abū Mikhnaf in al-Jamal."² Again when narrating the sermon delivered by 'Alī at the place called Dhū Qār, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes Abū Mikhnaf's version which is both different and longer from the one quoted in Nahj al-Balāgha³, and so on and so forth.

Al-Ṭūsī speaks of a book called al-Khutub al-Zahrā' written by Abū Mikhnaf and related to him by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, which may have been a single speech called al-Zahrā' or it may have been al-Khutub al-Zahrā', meaning several speeches. However, no speech of 'Alī has been referred to by this name by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī or anybody else after him, as far as I know.

3. Waq'at Siffīn of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī was, like Abū Mikhnaf, a Kufan traditionist and, in the words of Ibn Nadīm, "belonged to the generation of Abū Mikhnaf."⁴ Yāqūt points out that he was a very staunch supporter of 'Alī, to the point of extremism.⁵ Yet in the work under discussion, i.e. Waq'at

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., I, p. 306.

2. Ibid., I, p. 147.

3. Ibid., I, p. 309.

4. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., vol. I, p. 202.

5. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., vol. VII, pp. 210-211.

Siffīn, there is nothing to show his extremism. The importance of the book lies in the fact that it must have been composed in the latter part of the second century or in the first decade of the third century if it was the last work that Naṣr composed. For Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim died in 212/827. Thus Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's works come in the class which have been recognised as the sources of Islamic historiography; like that of Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819), and Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, better known as Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. ca. 170/786).

In Waq'at Siffīn, however, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim has not referred to al-Wāqidī at all. Of the two Kalbīs, the father Muḥammad and the son Hishām, there are but only two traditions which merely cite "al-Kalbī" as the authority and there is the possibility that the al-Kalbī quoted is Hishām. As far as Abū Mikhnaḥ is concerned there are a number of traditions which point to him as the source. But by a curious gesture, Naṣr does not appear to be eager to acknowledge Abū Mikhnaḥ as one of the authorities. It is true, that Naṣr's immediate source, 'Umar ibn Sa'd, who in turn quoted Abū Mikhnaḥ's traditions, often omitting his name or merely saying 'an rajūl (i.e. from a man), may have been responsible for suppressing Abū Mikhnaḥ's name, but it is unlikely that Naṣr was unable to identify the tradition's source with the rest of the isnād. For example,

in traditions recorded on pages 7, 27, 51, 60, 471, 518 and 520¹, 'Umar ibn Sa'd, one of Naṣr's main sources, quotes traditions from Namīr ibn Wa'lah. This Namīr, quoting in turn al-Sha'bī as the source, has not been quoted by anybody else except Abū Mikhnaḥ. So there is the indication that Abū Mikhnaḥ's name has been deliberately suppressed by 'Umar ibn Sa'd, by not naming him, and by Naṣr by not identifying him in the book which he must have been able to do.

It is fairly certain that Waq'at Siffīn is one of the several works of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. Al-Ṭūsī credits him with the following works: (a) Kitāb al-Jamal; (b) Kitāb Siffīn; (c) Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusain; (d) Kitāb al-'Ain al-Wardah; (e) Kitāb Akhbār al-Mukhtār; (f) Kitāb al-Manāqib and others (al-Ṭūsī's words).² Ibn Nadīm lists a different set, viz., (a) al-Maghāzī; (b) Kitāb al-Jamal; (c) Kitāb Siffīn; (d) Kitāb Maqtal Hujr ibn 'Adī; (e) Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusain.³ In these two lists some of the books appear to be identical with the ones Abū Mikhnaḥ has been credited with. It appears, therefore, that Abū Mikhnaḥ may have been the inspiring factor behind the aforesaid works. For like the above-discussed traditions, we observe that Naṣr has borrowed from Abū Mikhnaḥ both the subject matter and the titles of the works he is said to have written.

-
1. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waq'at Siffīn (Cairo and Qum, 1962), edited by 'Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn.
 2. Al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 347.
 3. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 202.

In view of the above shortcomings, it would not be unfair to examine the dependability of the author before examining the book and its narrators, al-ruwāt. If the Shī'ite traditionist, Ahmad ibn 'Alī al-Najjāshī (d. 450/1058), calls him Mustaqīm al-ṭarīqah (i.e. the treader of the straight path) and Sālih al-amr (i.e. the worthy of the task), it would be natural for him to do so. But it seems that the Sunnī authorities have not been happy with him on balance.¹

Waq'at Siffīn: The book begins with 'Alī's arrival in Kufah on his way back from al-Baṣrah and ends with the count of the losses of the battles of Siffīn and Nahrwān. The

-
1. Amongst those is Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347). In his Mizān al-I'tidāl he makes the following comments: "He [Naṣr] is a rāfiḍī [i.e. the extremist amongst the Shī'ites]. They have left him out. He died in 212 [A.H.] and he has been quoted by Nūḥ ibn Ḥabīb and Abū Sa'īd al-Ashajj and others. Al-'Uqailī said he was a liar. Abū Ḥātim said that he was of worthless traditions and has been left out. Al-Dār Quṭnī said he was weak. However, I must say that some of the traditions Naṣr quoted came from Shu'bah [ibn al-Ḥajjāj, d. 160/776]." Mizān al-I'tidāl, vol. IV 9 (Cairo, 1963), pp. 253-4. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī speaks of Naṣr in the following words: "Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Abū al-Faḍl, al-Minqarī: lived in Baghdad and transmitted traditions from Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/777], Shu'bah, Ḥabīb ibn Ḥassān, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Siyāh, Yazīd ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tustarī, Abī al-Jārūd, Ziyād ibn al-Mundhir . . . [after naming the rest of the authorities Naṣr quotes from, al-Khaṭīb quotes al-Jawzānī as saying:] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim was a deviator from the right path inclined towards [the
opposite/

following are the major sources and authorities of the book under discussion:

'Umar ibn Sa'd: One of the two rocks Waq'at Siffīn has been built on (the other being 'Amr ibn Shāmīr as we shall see). 'Umar, in turn quotes from the following authorities: (1) Ḥārith ibn Ḥaṣīrah; (2) Yaḥyā ibn Sa'id; (3) Namīr ibn Wa'lah; (4) 'Aṭṭīya ibn al-Ḥārith; (5) Ismā'il ibn Yazīd; (6) Abū Mikhnaḥ; (7) Abū Zuhair al-'Absī; (8) Laith ibn Sālīm; (9) Yūsuf ibn Yazīd; (10) Yazīd ibn Khālīd ibn Qaṭan; (11) 'Umar ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Yu'la; (12) Muslim al-A'war; (13) al-Kalbī; (14) al-Ḥajāj ibn Arṭāt; (15) A man; (16) Sa'd ibn Ṭarīf; (17) A man from the family of Khārijah ibn al-Ṣalt; (18) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āṣim; (19) Abū al-Mujāhid Sa'd ibn Akhram al-Ṭā'ī; (20) A man quoting 'Abd Allāh ibn Judab; (21) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd; (22) Yaḥyā ibn Yu'lā; (23) Abū Yaḥyā Zādhān al-Kūrī; (24) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Jundab; (25) Mālīk ibn A'yan; (26) 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān; (27) Faḍl or Fuḍail ibn Khadīj; (28) al-Ḥur ibn Sayyāḥ; (29) Muḥammad ibn Ishāq; (30) Abū 'Alqamah al-Khath'amī; (31) Abū al-Ṣalt al-Taimī; (32) Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq; (33) Suwaid ibn Ḥabbah; (34) A man quoting from Ju'aifar ibn Abī al-Qāsim; (35) A man from the tribe of Bakr ibn Wā'il; (36) al-Zubair ibn Salīm; (37) al-Barrā' ibn Ḥayyān al-Dhuhulī; (38) Khālīd ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid; (39) Muthannā ibn akhī 'Itāb;

opposite direction]." Then al-Khaṭīb adds: "What al-Jawzānī meant was Naṣr's extreme rafḍ [i.e. refutation of some of the Companions of Muḥammad]." Aḥmad ibn 'Alī, Tārīkh Baghdād, vol. XIII (Hyderabad, 1325 A.H.), p. 414.

(40) A friend of the narrator's father; (41) al-A'mash; (42) al-Sha'bī; (43) al-Ajlaḥ ibn 'Abd Allāh; (44) A man quoting Shaqīq ibn Salamah; (45) Abū Ishāq al-Shaibānī; (46) Abū Janāb al-Kalbī; (47) Abū 'Abd Allāh Yazīd al-Ūdī; (48) Ishāq ibn Yazīd; (49) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āṣim; (50) Mujālid.

Most quoted among the authorities listed above is Ḥārith ibn al-Ḥaṣīrah, who is the source of the traditions which appear on pages 3, 34, 37, 50, 51, 100, 102, 104, 121, 127, 131, 167, 172, 203, 227, 242, 262, 263, 302, 340, 395, 426, 439, 466, 489, 500, 501, 508, 551 of the edition of the book under study.¹ Al-Ḥārith was a member of the tribe of Azd and a Kufan by birth and residence. He narrates traditions from Zaid ibn Wahab, Abū Ṣādiq, Jābir al-Ju'fī, Sa'īd ibn 'Amr and others. Al-Bukhārī at his mention points out that he used to believe in al-Raj'ah (i.e. the coming back of 'Alī and other Imams). While Ibn 'Adī says of him the following: "The Kufan traditions in the praise of, or describing the distinctions of, Ahl al-Bait [i.e. the people of Muḥammad's household] generally emanate from him. And if the people of Baṣrah quoted him, they did so here and there in the scattered traditions. He is the one who is regarded as the scorching Shī'ite but despite his weakness his traditions are to be quoted and written down." To al-'Ījī, Ibn Namīr, and Abū Daūd, al-Ḥārith was dependable. And so he was to Imām al-Bukhārī and al-Nasā'ī, both of whom have quoted traditions from him.²

1. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, op. cit., pages as mentioned in text.

2. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. 2 (Hyderabad, 1325 A.H.), 140.

Next most quoted in the list is Namīr ibn Wa'lah who in turn quotes al-Sha'bī. We have already pointed out that his traditions have been transmitted only by Abū Mikhnaf, who has been named by 'Umar ibn Sa'd no more than once amongst his authorities. As D. S. Straley points out, all the traditions quoted by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim through 'Umar ibn Sa'd and Namīr ibn Wa'lah, are in fact those of Abū Mikhnaf.¹

Next comes 'Aṭṭīyah ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kūfī, who narrated traditions from Anas ibn Mālik, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Salāmī, Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd al-Taimī, 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Khalīfah, 'Ikrimah, al-Sha'bī and Daḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim. He is said to have written a commentary on the Qur'ān. Abū Daūd, al-Nasā'ī and ibn Mājah all have quoted traditions from him in their works known as al-Sunan.²

Most prominent in the list of authorities is Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yāsir, the well-known traditionist and the historian and the author of al-Sīrah. He was born ca. 85/704 at Madīna and associated with the second generation of the traditionists, al-Tābi'in, like al-Zuhrī, 'Āṣim ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Bakr and Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr. Muḥammad ibn Ishāq left Madīna to settle finally in Baghdad, whose foundations were laid down in the closing decade of his life (142/759). He died there in 150/767.

-
1. Dona Sue Straley, Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography, Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, 1977, p. 85.
 2. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. VII (Hyderabad, 1326/1908), p. 224.

His books, notably al-Sīrah and al-Maghāzī, have been regarded as the standard works of the second century.¹

‘Amr ibn Shamir al-Ju‘fī al-Kūfī: After ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d, he is the second major source of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. ‘Amr ibn Shamir (or Shimr) lived at the time of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imam of the Shī‘ites, and was in touch with him and his father, Muḥammad al-Bāqir and quotes traditions from both of them.² But his major sources are the traditions from Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju‘fī. Jābir was a Kufan and was a well-known authority in ‘Ilm al-Hadīth. As a result of being a Shī‘ite, the judgements of the Sunnite authorities on him are varied and interesting. Abū Nu‘aim quoted al-Thawrī (Sufyān) as saying:

-
1. For more details see A. Guillaume's introduction to The Life of Muhammad, i.e. al-Sīrah of Ibn Ishāq, translated by him (Oxford University Press, London, 1968), pp. xiii-xxvii.
 2. ‘Amr ibn Shamir quotes traditions from Muḥammad al-Bāqir, the fifth Imām of the Shī‘ites on pp. 156, 167, 204, 237, 300, 500 and 504. But most of ‘Amr's traditions come from Tamīm al-Nāǧī, whose traditions are quoted on pp. 169, 174, 230, 244, 272, 273, 293, 271, 476, 554; and from al-Sha‘bī, whose traditions are quoted on pp. 236, 239, 243, 245, 295, 301, 315, 330, 340 and 480. Next comes Ismā‘īl al-Suddī, whose traditions are mentioned on pp. 170, 171, 274, 342, 353 and 524. Last of the most quoted is ‘Āmir ibn Wāthilāh, whose traditions are recorded on pp. 174, 179, 241 and 457.

"When Jābir says that I have been told [such and such tradition] from so and so, then that is that!" (i.e. His words are final). Ibn Mahdī ('Abd al-Raḥmān) also quoted Sufyān al-Thawrī as saying that he had never seen a more cautious traditionist than Jābir.¹ While Ibn 'Ulayyā quotes Shu'bah (ibn al-Ḥajjāj) as saying: "He [Jābir] is most truthful in transmitting traditions."² Wakī' used to say: "Whatever else you may doubt, do not doubt that Jābir is a dependable narrator [the word used is al-thiqah]. For from him all, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu'bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj and Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ have narrated and quoted."³

Yet Jābir al-Ju'fī seemed to have been the powerhouse the traditionists of the day wanted to keep for themselves. People were forbidden to see him and were discouraged from taking traditions from him, and to prove this there is the tradition from Abū 'Uwāna, who said that both Shu'bah and Sufyān had asked him not to see Jābir. But whenever Abū 'Uwāna went to see Jābir he was told that they (Shu'bah and Sufyān) had been to see him! And then there is the tradition from Muḥammad ibn Rāfi'; he said: "I met [Imām] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal at the house of Yazīd ibn Ḥārūn and found him holding in his hands the book Zahīr, written by Jābir al-Ju'fī. I told the Imam: 'How is it that you ask us not to contact Jābir, whereas you yourself write down his

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 47.

2. Ibid.

3. al-Dhahabī, Mizān al-I'tidāl, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1963), p. 379.

traditions?' The Imām replied that '[We do so, so that] we know."¹ Wakī' also is said to have told Shu'bah: "Why is it that you left out so and so and took traditions from Jābir upon which he replied that he could not help it." Ibn Ḥabbān accuses him of being a follower of 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba' and believing that 'Alī will return to this world."² But that may not have agreed upon by others, of the Sunnite authorities, who recorded al-Ju'fī's traditions in their works like Abū Dāūd in his Sunan, al-Tirmidhī in his collection, and Ibn Mājah in his book. In short, Jābir ibn Yazīd, though much quoted, remains a disputed authority.

Waq'at Siffīn as one possible source of Nahj al-Balāgha

There are quotations of the writings and the speeches of 'Alī which conform to the recordings of Nahj al-Balāgha, such as:

1. Tradition No. 13, p. 20 -- inna 'amalaka laisa biṭu'mati wa lakinnahū amānat. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 5, vol. 3, p. 7.
2. Tradition No. 23, p. 55 -- 'Alī's letter to Jarīr ibn 'Abd Allāh. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 8, vol. 3, p. 9.
3. Tradition No. 23 (b), p. 57 -- 'Alī's reply to Mu'āwiya's letter. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 7, vol. 3, pp. 7-8.

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., p. 50.
 2. Ibid.

4. Tradition No. 34, p. 85 -- Mu'āwiyah's letter and 'Alī's reply to it. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 28, vol. 3, p. 34.
5. Tradition No. 41, p. 102 -- 'Alī's instructions to Ḥujr ibn 'Adī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 204, vol. 2, p. 211.
6. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- 'Alī's letter to Ibn 'Abbās. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 22, vol. 3, p. 23.
7. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- suggesting how the people of al-Baṣrah should be treated. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 18, vol. 3, p. 20.
8. Tradition No. 42, p. 107 -- Letter to the commanders of the army. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 50., vol. 3, p. 88-89.
9. Tradition No. 43, p. 108 -- Letter to Mu'āwiyah. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 10, vol. 3, p. 12.
10. Tradition No. 48, p. 121 -- Instructions to Ziyād ibn Naḍr and Shuraiḥ ibn Ḥānī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 56, vol. 3, pp. 24-5.
11. Tradition No. 48, p. 123 -- instructions to the afore-said men. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 11, vol. 3, p. 14.
12. Tradition No. 49, p. 125 -- another letter to the seniors in the army. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 60, vol. 3, p. 128.
13. Tradition No. 51, p. 131 -- on departure for the battle of Ṣiffīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 48, vol. 1, p. 93.
14. Tradition No. 51, p. 132 -- on departure for the battle of Ṣiffīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 46, vol. 1, p. 92.

15. Tradition No. 53, p. 134 -- on the way to the north, a short prayer. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 48, vol. 1, p. 93.
16. Tradition No. 96, p. 203 -- instructions in connection with treating the opponents. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.
17. Tradition No. 97, p. 204 -- instructions at the time of war. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 24 and No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.
18. Tradition No. 125, p. 231 -- the speech on the day of Şifḥīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 15, vol. 3, p. 17.
19. Tradition No. 128, p. 232 -- another speech on one of the days of Şifḥīn. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 169, vol. 2, p. 101.
20. Tradition No. 130, p. 235 -- the speech made to the army. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.
21. Tradition No. 143, p. 250 -- the address to Sa'īd. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 201, vol. 3, p. 198.
22. Tradition No. 148, p. 256 -- address to the army. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 105, vol. 1, p. 205.
23. Tradition No. 233, p. 466 -- a letter to Mu'āwiya replying. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 17, vol. 3, p. 18.
24. Tradition No. 240, p. 480 -- speech on the night known as al-harīr. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 206, vol. 2, p. 212.
25. Tradition No. 242, p. 490 -- speech when the copies of the Qur'ān were raised. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 48, vol. 3, p. 87.

26. Tradition No. 258, p. 520 -- the speech of 'Alī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, pp. 6-7 and No. 56, vol. 1, pp. 100-1.

4. Ansāb al-Ashraf of al-Balādhurī

Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279 A.H.) was one of the eminent historians of the third century of the Islamic era. The year of his birth is unknown but during the years of his intellectual activities he was in the company of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs al-Mutawwakil (d. 247 A.H.) and then al-Musta'īn (d. 248 A.H.). "He was," writes Ibn Nadīm (d. 380 A.H.), "one of the people of Baghdad but his grandfather, Jābir, was the secretary of al-Khaṣīb, the master of Egypt."¹ If that is true then the good taste and refined manners in him, may have come from his grandfather. He was not only a poet but a satire-writer too as Ibn Nadīm tells us the story of Wahb ibn Sulaymān, who "broke wind" in the presence of 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Khāqān and was quickly greeted by al-Balādhurī with the piece of poetry composed in his ridicule!²

He lived at a time when the processes of preservation of what had happened during the first and the second centuries (of the Islamic era) were in full swing. He had followed a celebrated trio, i.e. Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 151 A.H.), Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204 or, according

1. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 247.

2. Ibid.

to Ibn Nadīm, 206 A.H.), and Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. ca. 170 A.H.). I have not included al-Wāqidī not because he was any less important but because he happens to be al-Balādhurī's immediate source.¹ Although I must admit that according to Yāqūt, al-Balādhurī took, akhadha, from Muḥammad ibn Sa'd (d. 230 or 231 A.H.), that is, al-Wāqidī's secretary.²

However, as Hitti says: "Al-Baladhuri was one of the first to integrate the many stories of conquests of various cities and lands into one comprehensive whole, thus ending the era in which the monograph was the typical form of historical composition."³ There is little doubt about the dexterity of the presentation of material and clearness of the language in the works al-Balādhurī has produced. His work seem free from any obvious partisanship. His Futūḥ al-buldān presents him as an impartial observer.

In his work Ansāb al-Ashrāf, al-Balādhurī deals with the lives of many of those important to Islamic history and culture. The following comparisons with Nahj al-Balāgha are based on the Beirut edition which was printed in 1974, edited by al-Shaikh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī. The volume deals with the lives of Zubair ibn Muṭṭalib, Abū Ṭālib and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. In this volume al-Balādhurī not only covers the grounds of the general events but adds some

-
1. On p. 45 of vol. 2 of Ansāb al-Ashrāf under reference, al-Balādhurī begins the tradition with the sentence:
"I have been told by al-Wāqidī . . ."
 2. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1924), p. 127.
 3. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London, 1961), p. 388.

invaluable fresh material not covered in such detail elsewhere. For example, the letter Abū al-Aswad wrote to 'Alī concerning certain violations in the financial matters by Ibn 'Abbās.¹ Ibn 'Abbās' curt reply to 'Alī's letter and his eventual vacating the post and running away with the official money regarding it as belonging to him.² Secondly, at the time of the arbitration (al-Taḥkīm), al-Balādhurī reports that the delegation was headed by Ibn 'Abbās, who was "the judge" or khalīfa of 'Alī. They stayed together for one month at the place called Tadmur, corresponding with their respective parties, then they moved on to Dummat al-Jandal, staying there a month as well and from there they moved on to Adhrāḥ and stayed there for a month again. All these are remarkably different from the versions rendered by al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī. So is the report that Mu'āwiya, having arrived at the place of al-Taḥkīm, actually approached the tent of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar with the firm intention of giving the oath of allegiance (al-Bai'ah) but turned back on hearing that 'Abd Allāh had refused to accept the Caliphate and had said so to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ.³ Yet another piece of new information concerns the speech (which in Nahj al-Balāgha is numbered 27) which was not delivered by 'Alī but was written by him and was read out on his behalf, for 'Alī

-
1. Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1973), p. 169.
 2. Ibid., p. 172.
 3. Ibid., p. 345.

was ill at the time. That explains why this particular speech has been quoted by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.), Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnāwarī (d. 282 A.H.) and others with striking conformity.¹

One also observes that al-Balādhurī mostly quotes only a few lines of the given speeches, cutting them short with the sentence: fī kalām ṭawīl lahū, conveying, by implication, that the historian is more interested in the event than enunciations. However, the following are the speeches of Nahj al-Balāgha which have been partly or fully reported by al-Balādhurī in the volume described above.

al-Baladhurī's Ansāb al-Ashrāf as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

Tradition No. 054, p. 114, source: 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭālibī from his usual isnād. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 42, vol. 3, pp. 88-9.

Tradition No. 055, p. 114, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 183, vol. 3, p. 194.

Tradition No. 056, p. 115, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 20, vol. 3, p. 155.

1. Ibid., pp. 442-443. Cf. Al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1332/1913), pp. 25-26; and Abū Ḥanīfah al-Dīnāwarī, al-Akḥbār al-Ṭiwāl (Cairo, 1960), pp. 211-212.

Tradition No. 057, p. 115, source: Mūsā b. Ja'far from his forefathers. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 81, vol. 3, p. 168.

Tradition No. 058, p. 115, source: al-Madā'inī ('Alī b. Muḥammad, d. 225 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 192, vol. 3, p. 196.

Tradition No. 060, p. 115, source: Isrā'īl (b. Yūnus, d. 161 or 162 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 312, vol. 3, p. 228.

Tradition No. 067, p. 116, source: Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204 or 206 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 66 (the section dealing with letters), vol. 3, p. 139.

Tradition No. 076, p. 119, source: Muḥammad ibn Sirīn (d. 110 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 369, vol. 3, p. 264.

Tradition No. 077, p. 119, source: Yūnus b. Arqam. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 57, vol. 1, p. 101.

Tradition No. 083, p. 122, source: 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṭālibī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 194, vol. 3, p. 197.

Tradition No. 098, p. 127, source: al-Madā'inī ('Alī ibn Muḥammad, d. 225 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 82, vol. 1, p. 145.

Tradition No. 171, p. 158 (letter), source: 'Abbās ibn Hishām al-Kalbī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 18, vol. 3, p. 20.

Tradition No. 173, pp. 158-9, source: Hishām al-Kalbī (as above). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 42, vol. 3, p. 75.

Tradition No. 178, pp. 160-1, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 43, vol. 3, p. 76.

Tradition No. 180, pp. 161-2, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 19, vol. 3, p. 21.

Tradition No. 182, p. 163, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 20, vol. 3, p. 22.

Tradition No. 183, p. 163, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 71, vol. 3, p. 145.

Tradition No. 200, p. 174, source: al-A'yān from Shu'bah ibn Sammak. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 41, vol. 3, pp. 72-75.

Tradition No. 231, p. 188, source: Abū 'Ubaid, Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 223 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 83, vol. 3, p. 168.

Tradition No. 298, p. 240, source: Abū Mikhnaf (d. ca. 170 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 14, vol. 3, p. 16.

Tradition No. 359, p. 279, source: Abū Mikhnaf, al-Madā'inī, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, Nos. 9 and 28, vol. 3, pp. 11 and 34-40, respectively.

Tradition No. 373, p. 302, source: Abū Mikhnaf, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.

Tradition No. 422, p. 349, source: Hishām al-Kalbī, Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 123, vol. 2, p. 7.

Tradition No. 423, p. 352, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 40, vol. 1, p. 87.

Tradition No. 436, pp. 365-6, source: Abū Mikhnaf, 'Aṭṭīya ibn al-Ḥārith, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 35, vol. 1, pp. 81-2.

Tradition No. 437, pp. 368-9, source: Abū Mujliz (Lāḥiq ibn Ḥamid, d. ?). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 77, vol. 1, pp. 124-5.

Tradition No. 439, p. 371, source: Ḥamid ibn Hilāl. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 36, vol. 1, p. 82.

Tradition No. 451, p. 380, source: Abū Ishāq (al-Sabi'ī, d. 127 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 1, pp. 78-80.

Tradition No. 452, pp. 380-1, source: Abū Mikhnaf, etc.

Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 29, vol. 1, pp. 69-71.

Tradition No. as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 58, vol. 1, p. 102.

Tradition No. 453, p. 382, source: Hishām al-Kalbī, Abū Mikhnaf, etc. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 27, vol. 1, p. 64.

Tradition No. 455, p. 383, source: Yahyā ibn Ma'in (d. 233 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 25, vol. 1, p. 60-1.

Tradition No. 463, p. 400, source: Ṣāliḥ ibn Kaisān (d. ca. 140 A.H.). Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 3, pp. 66-7.

Tradition No. 464, p. 402, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 39, vol. 1, p. 86.

Tradition No. 465, p. 404, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, same speech as quoted above.

Tradition No. 472, p. 417, source: Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 44, vol. 1, pp. 90-1.

Tradition No. 489, p. 438, source: Ibn Sirīn, Muḥammad ibn Zubair al-Hanzalī. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 66, vol. 1, p. 113, and No. 95, vol. 1, p. 189.

Tradition No. 492, pp. 442-3, source: Abū Bakr ibn 'Ayyāsh, Abū Ḥusain. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 27, vol. 1, pp. 63-6.

Tradition No. 493, pp. 447-8, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113, and No. 35, vol. 3, p. 67.

Tradition No. 508, pp. 473-4, source: Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, Abū Mikhnaf. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 61, vol. 3, p. 129.

Tradition No. 510, pp. 477-8, source: as above. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 1, p. 78.

5. al-Dīnāwarī

Abū Ḥanīfa, Aḥmad ibn Da'ūd al-Dīnāwarī was an outstanding authority in history and astronomy. He was born at al-Dīnāwar sometime in the first decade of the third century and died in the year 282 A.H. Of all the historians of Islam and the Arabs, al-Dīnāwarī is, perhaps, the only one who has provided us with the information prevailing in the subjugated great empires, especially Persia, prior to the conquest of Islam. By not altering the name of his grandfather, Wanand, as so many others had done, al-Dīnāwarī conveyed that he was not ashamed of his Persian origin. Although he travelled to almost all the centres of Islamic learning, he lived for most of his life in the place of his birth, the Persian conurbation of al-Dīnāwar. Speaking with obvious affection for the Persian emperors and their achievements and the administration of their

empire, and, at the same time, covering some of the important events down to 227 A.H., al-Dīnāwarī writes a very useful work.

Although different in many aspects, al-Dīnāwarī has one thing in common with most of the other late Islamic historians, in that he omits his isnād. When he does choose to provide the isnād, he confines it to the immediate source, for example, Haitham ibn 'Adī, al-Sha'bī, al-Aṣma'ī, etc.

Al-Akḥbār al-Tiwal¹ of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnāwarī as a source of some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha:

p. 140, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 134, p. 26.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 13, p. 41.

p. 151, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 14, pp. 41-42.

p. 153, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

p. 163, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 49, p. 88.

p. 165, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 204, p. 211.

p. 166, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 11, p. 14.

1. Published in Cairo, 1960.

- p. 181, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-6.
- p. 187, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 17, pp. 18-20.
- p. 191, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 48, p. 87.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 36, pp. 82-3.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 123, pp. 8-9.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 175, pp. 117-8.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 58, p. 102.
- p. 210, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.
- p. 211, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 27, pp. 66-3.

6. Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī

Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, better known as Ibn al-Wāḍih al-Ya'qūbī, was born in the north-east of modern Iran and spent his youth in Armenia. Later, in Khurasan, he was in the service of the Ṭāhirids and when their dynasty fell, al-Ya'qūbī moved to Egypt where he died in 284/897. The third century historian apparently wrote his history, which he called "The history of the world", while still in the eastern parts of the then Islamic 'Abbāsid empire. The history is not as detailed or elaborate as that of al-Ṭabarī, but it is in the pattern that the latter followed. He was, in the words of Brockelmann, "A Shī'ī of the moderate Musawīyā who belonged to the Imāmīs."¹

1. C. Brockelmann, Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. IV (Leyden, 1934), pp. 1152-3.

Yāqūt mentions other books that the 'Abbāsīd historian wrote, viz., Kitāb al-Asmā' al-Buldān (in one volume); Kitāb Akhbār al-Umam al-Sālifah; Kitāb Mashākilat al-Nās li-Zamānihim; apart from the history, which Yāqūt names as Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr.¹ Al-Ya'qūbī's history begins with the history of the patriarchs of Israel, then gives the story of the Messiah and the Apostles; of the rulers of Syria, Assyria and Babylon, the Indians, Greeks, Romans and Persians; northern people including Turks, Chinese, Egyptians, Berbers, Abyssinians, Bedja and Negroes, and lastly the pre-Islamic Arabs. The second part begins with the era of Islam and ends in 259/872.²

Al-Ya'qūbī's History of the World as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

p. 191, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 50, p. 95.

p. 193, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 91, pp. 182-3.

p. 193, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 237, pp. 259-60.

p. 193, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 58, p. 102.

p. 195, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 67, pp. 113-14.

p. 198, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 95, pp. 188-90.

p. 201, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 42, p. 75.

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1924), pp. 156-7.

2. For details see D. S. Straley, Thesis.

- p. 201, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 43, p. 76.
- p. 203, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 19, p. 21.
- p. 203, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 71, p. 145.
- p. 204, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 20, p. 22.
- p. 205, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 66, p. 139.
- p. 205, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 147, pp. 186-89.
- p. 206, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 81, p. 168.
- p. 206, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 82, p. 168.
- p. 206, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 116, p. 178.
- p. 207, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 30, p. 157.
- p. 207, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 23, p. 56.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 350, p. 336.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 131, pp. 181-83.
- p. 208, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 42, p. 88.
- p. 209, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 102, p. 173.
- p. 209, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 121, pp. 3-4.
- p. 211, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 16, pp. 42-44.
- p. 211, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 17, p. 50.
- p. 211, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 85, pp. 152-53.
- p. 212, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 17, pp. 50-51.

7. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī

Fairness has always been an accessible commodity. But some of the buyers have had to pay a high price for it. One such person has been the later celebrated and universally acknowledged historian, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. Yāqūt tells us of the tradition according to which the historian was buried at night for fear of some religious fanatics of the time who accused him of being a Shī'ite.¹ While Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī, one of the leading Shī'ī authorities, could only spare a line or two for his mention in his al-Fihrist and dismisses him as the person following the "common faith" ('āmi al-madhhab).² In fact his Shī'ism is no more provable than the fact that he wrote a book defending the authenticity of the tradition known as hadīth al-ghadīr³ and yet another book describing and defending the tradition known as hadīth al-tair.⁴ His Sunnism is no more undesirable, from the Shī'ite viewpoint, than his rendering of the events as and when they occurred during the period of the Orthodox Caliphate together with refraining from recording the traditions which so patently breathed the air of partisanship. Unlike Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/768)

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. VI (Cairo, 1930), p. 423.

2. al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), p. 281.

3. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., p. 452.

4. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Muqaddimah to Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī (Cairo, 1960), p. 11.

he does not drop hints suggestive of the author's partiality in favour of some traditions and doubts in respect of others.¹ At first glance his Annals appear to be repetitive, as a single event is related by several traditions recorded side by side. Yet this very device of his adds a further dimension to his work. It portrays how an event could be, and was, interpreted by each school of thought through its narrators (al-ruwāt) to support its point of view.

al-Ṭabarī was born at a place called 'Amul in the district of Ṭabaristān, in the year 224/838 or 225/839, and died at Baghdad, where he lived most of his life and perhaps composed most of his works too, in the year 310/922. The quest for knowledge took him from his birth place, 'Amul, first to Rayy and thence to Baghdad, to which he primarily set off to meet Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), but the Imām died before he could reach Baghdad. On reaching Baghdad for the first time, he did

1. But D. S. Straley rightly points out that while various opinions on a given event are recorded and "at first glance it would seem that there is little to choose between them", she proceeds to illustrate how an historian's view in favour of some traditions is indirectly expressed in the order of recording of them, i.e. those favoured by the historian coming first, and those least acceptable given the last place. Dona Sue Straley, Perspective and Method in Early Islamic Historiography, Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh University, 1977), p. 61.

not stay there for long and left for Baṣra. Subsequently he visited Syria and Egypt before returning to Baghdad. It was the information gathered during and through these journeys and the maghāzī of Ibn Ishāq, which he learned and copied from Salama ibn al-Faḍl that must have served as the foundations of his history.¹

Yet in the very field, the sources, lie the main weaknesses of Islamic history. Confining ourselves to the Annals of al-Ṭabarī only, we observe that in considerable parts of history he relies on al-Surrī who, if Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī is right in the tradition he has about him from Aḥmad ibn Hanbal², may have been a reliable person, but then further ahead in the chain (al-silsilah) we meet Saif ibn ʿUmar and Shuʿaib. Now it is true that Saif has been credited with two books he had written: one was called Kitāb al-Riddah and the other Kitāb al-Futūḥ³ and these books may have been available to al-Ṭabarī. But how reliable was he and how reliable were his sources? The traditionists do not think highly of him. "He is of weak traditions," says Yahyā ibn Maʿīn (d. 233/847) and, "His traditions

1. For details see D. S. Straley, Thesis.

2. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. IX (Hyderabad, 1327/1909), pp. 70-71.

3. Ibid., vol. IV, pp. 294-95.

have been found unacceptable," said Abū Hātim (d. 354/965). Ibn Hibān adds that he used to forge traditions and put them in the mouths of well known and acceptable narrators.¹ And as far as Shu'aib is concerned, no one seems to know anything about him.

Ibn Nadīm gives an account of al-Ṭabarī's early training and known teachers, in his al-Fihrist:

He acquired knowledge of the hadīth from the eminent shaikhs like Muḥammad ibn Ḥumaid al-Rāzī; Ibn Juraij; Ibn Kuraib; Hanād ibn Surri; 'Abbād ibn Ya'qūb; 'Ubaid Allāh ibn Ismā'īl al-Habbarī; Ismā'īl ibn Mūsā; 'Imrān ibn Mūsā al-Qazzāz; and Bishr ibn Mu'ādh al-'Uqdī. He studied the law under Dā'ūd and learned the legal system of al-Shāfi'ī from Rabī' ibn Sulaimān in Egypt, and also from Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Za'faranī at Baghdad. He learned the legal system of Malik [ibn Anas] from Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-'Alā and the descendants of

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 294-295.

'Abd al-Ḥakam, who were Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, and Sa'd; also from the sons of the brother of Wahb. He learned the legal system of al-'Irāq from Abū Muqātil at al-Rayy and mastered the asānīd in Egypt, Syria and al-'Irāq and at al-Kūfah, al-Baṣra and at al-Rayy.¹

This mode of training reflects in his Annals. For example, his adherence to isnād and his recording of the varying versions of the same tradition. He was, to quote Gibb at this point, "essentially a traditionist but independent withal."²

Al-Ṭabarī begins his history from the Creation of the World and ends it in the year 302 A.H. According to the tradition recorded by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, al-Ṭabarī completed his annals on Wednesday, 27th Rābi' al-Awwal, 303/915.³ As to what impression al-Ṭabarī's history has created on the Western mind, it is well represented in Dona Straley's work in which she discusses the person al-Ṭabarī was and the methodology and attitudes he applied to his history, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk.⁴

-
1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist, vol. I (New York, 1970, trans. Bayard Dodge), pp. 563-64.
 2. Gibb, H. A. R., Arabic Literature (Oxford, 1963), p. 80.
 3. Yāqūt, op. cit., p. 426.
 4. D. S. Straley, op. cit.

The possible extracts which the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha may have taken from the Annals:

Extract No. 1 -- 'Alī's address to 'Uthmān, vol. 5, p. 96. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 162, vol. 2, p. 84.

Extract No. 2 -- Having been approached to accept the Caliphate, vol. 5, p. 157. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 90, vol. 2, p. 182.

Extract No. 3 -- 'Alī's first speech after becoming Caliph, vol. 5, p. 157. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 165, vol. 2, pp. 97-98.

Extract No. 4 -- On the request to punish the killers of 'Uthmān, vol. 5, p. 158. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 166, vol. 2, pp. 98-99.

Extract No. 5 -- Inviting people to go to war with Mu'āwiya, vol. 5, pp. 163-64. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 167, vol. 2, pp. 99-100.

Extract No. 6 -- On hearing the news of the revolt brewing at Mecca, vol. 5, p. 164. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 167, vol. 2, p. 100.

Extract No. 7 -- Instructions to Ziyād and Shuraih to hand over the command to Malik al-Ash'ar, vol. 5, p. 238. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 13, vol. 3, p. 15.

Extract No. 8 -- Instructions to the army, vol. 6, p. 6. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 13, vol. 3, p. 16.

Extract No. 9 -- An invocation at the time of war, vol. 6, p. 8. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 13, vol. 2, pp. 101-02.

Extract No. 10 - Instruction on the manners of fighting, vol. 6, p. 9. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, pp. 4-7.

Extract No. 11 - A reaction to the retreat of the right wing of the army in one of the days of the battle of Şiffīn, vol. 6, pp. 13-14. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 105, vol. 1, p. 205.

Extract No. 12 - After hearing the judgement of al-Hakamain, Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, vol. 6, p. 43. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 35, vol. 1, p. 81.

Extracts No. 13 and 14 - Addressing al-Khawārij before the battle of Nahrwān, vol. 6, p. 47. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 36, vol. 1, pp. 82-83, and No. 58, vol. 1, p. 102.

Extract No. 15 - An address to people inciting them for war, vol. 6, p. 51. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 37, vol. 1, pp. 78-79.

Extract No. 16 - A letter to the people of Egypt appointing Malik al-Ashtar as the governor, vol. 6, p. 55. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 38, vol. 2, pp. 70-71.

Extract No. 17 - A letter to Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, explaining the reasons owing to which he has been replaced, vol. 6, p. 55. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 34, vol. 3, pp. 66-67.

Extract No. 18 - Addressing al-Khawārij, vol. 6, p. 36.
Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 123, vol. 2, p. 7 and No. 125, vol. 2.

Extract No. 19 - On hearing the news that Egypt has been conquered, vol. 6, p. 62. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 39, vol. 2, p. 86.

Extract No. 20 - The letter to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, then the governor of al-Baṣra, informing him of the above conquest, vol. 6, p. 63. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 35, vol. 3, p. 67.

Extract No. 21 - Comments after hearing the news that Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr had been put to death, vol. 6, p. 63. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 65, vol. 1, p. 113.

Extract No. 22 - Comments when Masqalah ibn Ḥubairah, the governor of Azarbayjan, emancipated the captives and then ran away to Damascus with his debts to the state, vol. 6, p. 76. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 44, vol. 1, pp. 90-91.

Extract No. 23 - The speech when Nu'mān ibn Bashir, commanding an army of two thousand, attacked 'Ain al-Tamr, vol. 6, p. 77. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113, and No. 29, vol. 1, pp. 70-71, and No. 95, vol. 1, p. 189.

Extract No. 24 - The will to his sons, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusain, and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, vol. 6, p. 85. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, pp. 85-87.

8. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī

At the time when Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 A.H.) was engaged in composing his renowned Annals, there was another historian, Ibn A'tham who, to quote Carl Brockelmann, was writing "from the Shi'ite point of view a romantic history of early Caliphs and their conquests."¹ Ibn A'tham died just four years after al-Ṭabarī, i.e. 314 A.H. But unlike al-Ṭabarī his personality remains obscure. Was he a Shī'ite? If so, then it is strange indeed that al-Ṭūsī (d. 458 A.H.) should ignore him. Or Ibn Nadīm, writing earlier than al-Ṭūsī and being nearer to Ibn A'tham, in terms of time, should not mention him or his books. It seems that at least by some Shī'a scholars Ibn A'tham was not regarded as a Shī'ite. Sayyid Nūr Allāh Shūstarī, in his book Majālis al-Mu'minīn, calls him a Shāfi'ī.²

However, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (575-627 A.H.) says the following about him:

A Shī'ite historian, weak to the traditionists [aṣḥāb al-hadīth], he wrote a book called al-Mālūf and a book called al-Futūḥ which is well known in which he has recorded the events down to the time of [Hārūn] al-Rashīd [149-194 A.H.]. He wrote yet another book

1. Carl Brockelmann, Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. II (Leyden, 1927), pp. 364-65.

2. Muḥsin al-'Amulī, A'yān al-Shi'ah, vol. VII (Damascus, 1938), p. 429.

beginning with al-Mā'mūn's period down to the last days of al-Muqtadir [killed, 320 A.H.]. . . . This last book is probably a sequel to the first one [al-Futūh] and I have seen both of them.¹

Now this creates further doubts in respect of the year in which Ibn A'tham actually died. Carl Brockelmann, in the above quoted comments says it to be 314 A.H., but if Yāqūt is correct then Ibn A'tham was still alive at least around 320.

Of the notable Shī'ite scholars who have accepted Ibn A'tham as a Shī'ite and quoted from his history is Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111) in his Bihār al-Anwār. Muṣṭafā ibn 'Abd Allāh, better known as Ḥajjī Khalīfa, omits mentioning his religious tendencies and simply refers to his al-Futūh adding that it was translated into Persian by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad.²

Al-Futūh of Aḥmad ibn al-A'tham al-Kūfī as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

vol. 2, p. 37. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 132, pp. 24-25.

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. I (Cairo, 1923), p. 379.

2. Ḥajjī Khalīfah, Kashf al-Zunūn (Istanbul, 1942), p. 1239.

vol. 2, pp. 92-93. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 226, p. 249.

vol. 2, p. 244. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 90, p. 182.

vol. 2, p. 287. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 167, pp. 99-100.

vol. 2, p. 307. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 121, pp. 3-4.

vol. 2, p. 314. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-7.

vol. 2, pp. 347-48. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 42, pp. 88-89.

vol. 2, p. 352. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

vol. 2, p. 367. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 5, p. 7.

vol. 2, p. 373. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 6, p. 8.

vol. 2, p. 381. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 43, p. 89.

vol. 2, p. 393. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 8, p. 9.

vol. 2, p. 431. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 7, pp. 8-9.

vol. 2, p. 448. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 204, pp. 211-12.

vol. 2, p. 461. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 46, p. 92.

vol. 2, p. 462. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 48, p. 93.

vol. 2, p. 474. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 37-39.

vol. 2, p. 477. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, p. 34.

vol. 2, pp. 490-91. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 13-14, pp. 51-56.

vol. 3, p. 44. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p. 16.

vol. 3, p. 72. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 122, pp. 4-7.

vol. 3, pp. 259-60. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 17, p. 18.

vol. 4, pp. 66-67. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 25, pp. 60-61.

vol. 4, pp. 66-67. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 27, pp. 63-66.

vol. 4, p. 198. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 26, pp. 62-63.

vol. 4, pp. 100-101. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, Nos. 28, 58, 35, pp. 69, 102, 85.

vol. 4, pp. 104-05. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 62, pp. 130-32.

9. al-Kulainī

Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulainī's book, al-Kāfī fī 'l-Hadīth became to the Shī'ites what al-Sahīh of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.) has been to the Sunnites, the first and the prime source of Islamic traditions. The number of traditions al-Kulainī has collected in the book amounts to over 16,000 and it has been stated that this exceeds the number of the traditions recorded in all the Siḥāh al-Sitta put together.¹ The second noteworthy fact about al-Kāfī is that it was composed during the period known to the Shī'ites as the period of al-Ghaibah al-Ṣuḡhrā, i.e. the period when allegedly it was possible to get in touch with the hidden Imam through one of his four deputies. Hence the saying attributed to the said Imām about the book: Kāfin li Shī'atinā (Sufficient it is for our followers). This, although most likely to be spurious, does nevertheless indicate the deference and the esteem with which the early Shī'ites regarded the book. In modern times, they have taken pains in counting and classifying its traditions, according to the terminologies of the late traditionists, as: al-Sahīh (the sound ones), 5,072; al-Hasan (the good ones), 140; al-Muwaththaq (the trustworthy), 1,118; al-Qāwī (the strong or likely), 302; and al-Da'īf (the weak), 9,489.²

1. Agha Buzurg Tehranī, al-Dharī'ah, vol. XVII (Tehran, 1967), p. 17.

2. al-Kintūrī, Kashf al-Hujūb (Calcutta, 1920), p. 418.

Born in Kulain, a village in the district of Rayy, roughly the site of the present Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīm in Iran, al-Kulainī spent most years of his life in Baghdad where he composed his book al-Kāfī and where he died in the year 328 A.H.

Al-Kāfī fī 'l-Hadīth as one of the possible source of Nahj al-Balāgha is shown by the following comparisons and examples:

1. The tradition No. 25 (Chapter: al-'Aql wa 'l-Jahl) is identical with Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 113, vol. 3, p. 177, in an augmented form. Al-Kāfī attributes the two sentences which it quotes, to Muḥammad, addresseing 'Alī.
2. The tradition No. 115 (Chapter: Fadl al-'Ilm, section: al-Mustā'kil bi 'Ilmihi wa 'l-Mubāḥī bihī) is quoted verbatim in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 457, vol. 3, p. 261. However, in al-Kāfī it is attributed to the Prophet.
3. The tradition No. 158 (Chapter, Fadl al-'Ilm, section: al-Bid' wa 'l-rā'i wa 'l-Maqā'īs) is quoted in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.
4. Tradition No. 163 (Chapter and section as above, No. 3) is almost self same with what is quoted in No. 17, vol. 1, p. 47, of Nahj al-Balāgha.
5. Tradition No. 190 (Chapter as above, No. 3, section: Ikhtilāf al-Aḥādīth), the contents appear in No. 208, vol. 2, p. 214, of Nahj al-Balāgha.

6. The tradition No. 346 (Chapter: al-Tawhīd, section: Jawāmi' al-Tawhīd), parts of the speech reported in this tradition have been quoted in No. 1, vol. 1, p. 7, and No. 89, vol. 1, p. 159.
7. The tradition No. 349 (Chapter: as above, No. 6, section: as above, No. 6), a shortened version of this tradition appears in No. 177, vol. 2, p. 120.
8. The tradition No. 350 (Chapter and section as above, No. 6), Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 150, vol. 2, p. 53, an augmented form which contains a slightly varied version of this tradition.
9. The tradition No. 352 (Chapter and section as above, No. 6), of this tradition there are sentences in No. 180, vol. 2, p. 125, and in No. 184, vol. 2, p. 142.
10. The tradition No. 398 (Chapter: al-Tawhīd, section: al-Jabr wa 'l-Qadr wa 'l-Amr bain al-Amrain), the contents of this tradition appear in the entry No. 78, vol. 3, p. 168.
11. The tradition No. 783 (Chapter: al-Hujja, section: al-Ishārāt wa 'l-Nass 'alā al-Hasan bin 'Alī), the contents of the speech No. 147, vol. 2, p. 45, conform.
12. The tradition No. 1541 (Chapter: al-Īmān wa 'l-Kufr, section: Nisbat al-Islām), the first part of this tradition concerning the definition of Islam has been quoted verbatim by the entry No. 125, vol. 3, p. 180.

13. The tradition No. 1549 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Ṣifat al-Īmān), the contents of the tradition appear in the entry No. 30, vol. 3, pp. 157-58.
14. The tradition No. 1549 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Da'ā'im al-Kufr wa-Shu'abuh [al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Najaf, 1381 A.H.]), cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 30, vol. 4 [Beirut, n.d.], p. 88.
15. The tradition No. 1911 (Chapter, as above, No. 12, section: Dhamm al-Dunyā wa 'l-zuhd fīhā), parts of the contents of this tradition appear in No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. In al-Kāfī's version, however, the speaker is said to have been 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain, the fourth Imam of the Shī'ites and a grandson of 'Alī; the remaining parts of this tradition appear in No. 104, vol. 3, pp. 173, 174, and No. 30, vol. 3, p. 157. The remainder in No. 191, vol. 2, pp. 186, 187 -- the sermon which is said to have been delivered by 'Alī in response to the request made to him by one of his companions, Humām ibn Ghālib, to define the God-fearing (al-muttaqīn).
16. The tradition No. 1996 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Ṣilat al-Rahm), the contents of this tradition concerning one's tribe and the members of his household, is contained by No. 23, vol. 1, pp. 57, 58.
17. The tradition No. 2254 (Chapter, as above, No. 12, section: al-Taqqiya), this tradition may have been the source of No. 57, vol. 1, p. 101.

18. The tradition No. 2279 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: al-Kitmān), attributed to the Prophet, a part of No. 101, vol. 1, p. 198, conforms with the contents of the tradition.

19. The tradition No. 2284 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: al-Mu'min wa 'Alāmatuhu wa Ṣifātuhū), this tradition states that 'Alī was on the pulpit when he was interrupted by one of his companions, Humām, who asked him to define a mu'min (believer), his signs and the attributes, upon which 'Alī delivered the speech. If we were to assume this tradition to be the possible source of No. 191, vol. 2, then it is obvious that the editor has thoroughly revised it. The version of this tradition or a part of it, which has already been referred to in No. 14 above, appears to be the concise but more genuine rendering of the tradition.

20. The tradition No. 2304 (Chapter and section as above, No. 19), this description of some of Muḥammad's companions constitutes a part of No. 95, vol. 1, p. 190.

21. The tradition No. 2506 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: al-Riya), the tradition constitutes a part of No. 23, vol. 1, p. 57.

22. The tradition No. 2652 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: al-Zulm), the varieties of oppression as this tradition describes, have been quoted in No. 174, vol. 2, p. 116.

23. The tradition No. 2677 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Ittibā' al-Hawā), this tradition is properly referred to by No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. But it has also been contained by No. 28, vol. 1, p. 68.

24. The tradition No. 2684 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: al-Makr wa 'l-Kh^uḍī'ah), this tradition forms a part of the remarks made by 'Alī while speaking about Mu'āwiya in No. 198, vol. 2, p. 206.

25. The tradition No. 2833 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Mujalasat Ahl al-Ma'āsi), the contents of this tradition correspond with the wording of No. 38, vol. 3, p. 160. But here again, the speaker, according to al-Kāfī, is 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain as in the tradition No. 1911 described above.

26. The tradition No. 2868 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Da'ā'im al-Kufr wa Shu'abuhū), an extracted version of this tradition appears in No. 31, vol. 3, p. 158. The collector records in the said entry that he had extracted it from a longer version of the speech.

27. Tradition No. 2996 (Chapter: as above, No. 12, section: Fī anna al-Dhunūb Thalāthatun), with the change of the word al-zulm instead of al-dhunūb, the contents of the tradition have been recorded in No. 174, vol. 2, p. 116.

28. The tradition No. 3045 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Muḥāsabāt al-‘Amal), this tradition constitutes a part of No. 80, vol. 1, p. 127.

29. The tradition No. 3046 (Chapter as above, No. 12, section: Man Ya‘īb al-Nās), this tradition and others which follow it immediately, under this section, the ideas and words appear in No. 349, vol. 3, p. 235, as elsewhere in Nahj al-Balāgha. The narrator of the tradition in al-Kāfī is Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir, the fifth Imam of the Shī‘ites, and the son of ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusain, already spoken of in this section.

Extracts from al-Kulainī's al-Rawḍah min al-Kāfī (Tehran, 1389 A.H.)

30. The tradition No. 3, p. 17 (‘Alī's will to his companions). This tradition appears as part of No. 101, vol. 1, p. 197.

31. The tradition No. 4, pp. 18-30 (the speech of ‘Alī, called al-Wasīlah). Of this long speech quoted by al-Kulainī, only parts appear in Nahj al-Balāgha. First, the part beginning: "Man nazar fī ‘aib nafsihī...", p. 19, appears in No. 349, vol. 3, p. 235. Next, the part beginning with "Lā māl a‘wad min al-‘aql", p. 20, appears in No. 113, vol. 3, p. 177. The part of the speech beginning: "Inna al-manā‘iyya qabl al-danniyya", p. 21, appears in No. 396, vol. 3, pp. 248-49. The part beginning "A‘jab mā fī al-insān qalbuhū", p. 21, appears in No. 108, vol. 3, p. 175.

32. The tradition No. 21, p. 58, has been recorded, if the collector's source were al-Rawḍah, in two parts. The first part beginning: "Inna akhwaf mā akhāf ʿilaikum khullatān", p. 58, appears in No. 42, vol. 1, p. 88. Next, the part beginning: "Wa innamā bad' wuqū' al-fitan", p. 58, appears in No. 50, vol. 1, p. 95.

33. The tradition No. 22, pp. 63-66, appears in Nahj al-Balāgha in two parts. First, No. 86, vol. 1, pp. 154-55, beginning: "Inna Allāh lam yaqṣim jabbārī dahr qaṭṭ", al-Rawḍah, p. 64; the second, in No. 164, vol. 2, pp. 95-96, beginning: "Alā inna Allāh sayajma'ukum lisharr yawmin", al-Rawḍah, pp. 64-66.

34. The tradition No. 23. The beginning of this tradition has been omitted by the collector as he begins the speech from the sentence: "'Alā wa inna balliya takum qad 'ādat", al-Rawḍah, p. 67. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 16, vol. 1, pp. 42-47. Note that the end of the speech has appeared in Nahj al-Balāgha vastly improved from the version rendered by al-Kulainī.

35. The tradition No. 25. This tradition appears in No. 102, vol. 3, p. 173. Note the difference in the closing words: in al-Rawḍah, p. 69, it is "Sultān al-imā' wa amr al-ṣibyān", whereas in Nahj al-Balāgha it is "Imārat al-ṣibyān wa tadbīr al-khiṣyān".

36. The tradition No. 251. This speech addressed by 'Alī to Abū Dharr appears in No. 128, vol. 2, p. 17. Note that in al-Rawdah, pp. 206-08, al-Kulainī assigns parts as spoken by al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain whereas the collector assigns the whole speech to 'Alī.

37. The tradition No. 327. This letter to Ibn 'Abbās from 'Alī has been recorded by the collector in No. 22, vol. 3, p. 21.

38. The tradition No. 368, 'Alī's speech after the battle of al-Jamal. Although the beginning of No. 109, vol. 1, p. 216, conforms, the remainder is so different that this tradition could not have been the collector's source in the aforesaid khutbah.

39. The tradition No. 479, al-Rawdah, pp. 307-08. The augmented form of this tradition appears in No. 369, vol. 3, p. 241.

40. The tradition No. 550, al-Rawdah, pp. 352-60, the speech of 'Alī at Ṣiffīn. The speech appears in No. 214, pp. 223-27. Although the speech appears to be the same, there are linguistic improvements in al-Raḍī's version. I have also observed that the collector leaves out the sentences which do not appear to be eloquent or so eloquent as he would like them to be. As for his leaving out the names, he may, perhaps, have had some valid reasons.

41. The tradition No. 586, the speech at the place called Dhū Qār, al-Rawḍah, pp. 386-91. The speech No. 145, vol. 2, pp. 40-43. Looking at al-Kulainī's version, it appears that this speech has been recorded in Nahj al-Balāgha in the edited form. Here and there there is the difference in words between the two versions. The speech No. 17, which appears at the first part of Nahj al-Balāgha, appears to be the part of this speech.

10. al-Mas'ūdī

"This man," writes Ibn Nadīm, "from among the people of al-Maghrib [North Africa], was known as Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī. He was the descendant of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd and a compiler of books about the history and traditions of the kings."¹ This statement is duly rectified by Carl Brockelmann, who points out that "according to his own statement, however, he was born in Baghdad and descended from an Arab family."²

Al-Mas'ūdī's style is markedly different from the historians who had preceded him. Writing in simpler language, he usually ignores isnād and the study of his Murūj al-Dhahab gives the impression of a historian

-
1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (tr. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970), p. 338.
 2. Carl Brockelmann, Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden, 1936), pp. 403-04.

writing his notes in shorthand and expecting that the reader will refer to his detailed works which he lists at the beginning. Unfortunately most of his works have been lost and the works which have survived may not qualify to be called "historical", except, of course, Murūj al-Dhahab.

Al-Mas'ūdī is said to have been a Shī'ite, and in addition to his works al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf and Murūj al-Dhahab, it is also alleged that he is the author of an Ithnā 'asharī work called Ithbāt al-Waṣīyya. Although this claim is disputed, the historical work Murūj al-Dhahab shows distinct Shī'ite tendencies. It covers the history of the world as it was known at the author's time and ends around the year 332 A.H. He died in 345 A.H.

Al-Mas'ūdī's Murūj al-Dhahab as one of the possible sources of and containing some of the utterances of 'Alī as reported in Nahj al-Balāgha:¹

p. 371, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 14, p.

p. 377, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 13, pp. 40-41.

p. 431, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 131, p. 182.

p. 432, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, Nos. 28 and 42,
pp. 66-68 and 88-89.

1. All the following references occur in the second volume of Murūj al-Dhahab.

- p. 432, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3, No. 104, p. 173.
- p. 432, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 191, p. 185.
- p. 433, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 80, p. 127.
- p. 436, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, No. 147, p. 45.
- p. 436, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 66-68.
- p. 437, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, No. 28, pp. 66-68.

B. Literary Sources

1. 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ

Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ used to say that he was older than Abū Nūwās, the 'Abbāsīd poet (d. 198/813), for he was born in the beginning of the year 150/767, while Abū Nūwās was born at the end of it.¹ If this report of Yāqūt is correct then Ibn Khallikān's statement that al-Jāḥiẓ died in the ninety-second year of his life² does not seem to be correct. As all the biographers agree that he died in 255/868, he must have died a centenarian. However, al-Jāḥiẓ's works represent an early landmark in the fields of literary, zoological and anthropological 'Abbāsīd works which became the acknowledged source of the writers who came after him.

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. VI (Cairo, 1930), p. 56.

2. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, vol. I (Cairo, 1892), p. 492.

His Kitāb al-Ḥayawān served as the source for al-Damīrī while his al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn remained one of the essentials in the area of early Arabic and Islamic prose and poetry. Al-Jāḥiẓ was, as reflected in his writings, a man of sharp intelligence, simple but elegant style but as it seems, shifting conviction. The examples of the latter are in the list of the books he is said to have written and which include a book in praise of al-nabīdh and another in condemnation of al-nabīdh; a book in praise of scribes and yet another in condemnation of scribes; a book in praise of the book-sellers and another in condemnation of booksellers.¹ However, his independence of mind gained many followers, even amongst the Mu'tazilites, to whom he is said to have belonged, who became known as the members of the Mu'tazilite sect, al-Jāḥiẓīyah.

The following extracts and comparisons are from al-Jāḥiẓ's al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, which may have served as one of the possible sources of the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. It may be observed that the four addresses which al-Jāḥiẓ quotes in the aforesaid book, appear in Nahj al-Balāgha in the same sequence and order.²

1. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., p. 78.

2. Cf. Nahj al-Balāgha (No. 16, part II of the sermon) and al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, pp. 50-51, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1975, edition); Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 28, and al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, p. 52; Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 27, and al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, p. 53; and Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 29, and al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, p. 56.

al-Jāhiz as one of the sources of some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha:

vol. 2, p. 52, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 28/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 53, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 27/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 56, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 29/part 1.

vol. 2, p. 77, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 82/part 3.

vol. 2, p. 190, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 131/part 3.

vol. 3, p. 148, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 130/part 3.

vol. 3, p. 155, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, 130/part 3.

2. Kitāb al-Irshād

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān, better known as al-Mufīd, was born in the village known as Suwaiqat ibn al-Baṣrī, which was situated at the time about twenty-five miles from Baghdad, in the year 338. Writing sometime in the late fourth century, Ibn Nadīm remarks: "He belongs to our time. With him there culminates leadership among his associates of the Imamiyyah [Sect] of the Shī'a, in connection with the law, theology and ancient traditions."¹ Although al-Mufīd died in the year 413/1022 it appears that most of his books were

1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (tr. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970), p. 443.

written within the fourth century. I have included him with the "pre-Nahj al-Balāgha" authors for two reasons: first, because al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, together with his brother al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, were brought to al-Mufīd as children to be taught by him.¹ It is therefore more likely that al-Raḍī used some of his teacher's books as his source than the opposite. Al-Mufīd's accounts of 'Alī's speeches, sermons, etc., which we shall study below, do vary in certain degrees and this is an indication that al-Mufīd's sources were different. That none of his material quoted from and attributed to 'Alī has been taken from Nahj al-Balāgha is almost a certainty. The second reason is that most of the comparisons with Nahj al-Balāgha have been made with his book called al-Irshād. Now there is evidence provided by the contemporary authors that the book existed twenty-odd years before the compilation of Nahj al-Balāgha. Ibn Nadīm died in the year 380/990 and he cites al-Irshād as one of al-Mufīd's books.² Nahj al-Balāgha, according to the compiler's statement, was completed in the year 400.³

Kitāb al-Irshād is then an important work with regard to the collections of the speeches of 'Alī, since a substantial section in the book is devoted to speeches

-
1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. I (Cairo, 1959), p. 41.
 2. Ibn Nadīm, op. cit., p. 491.
 3. Al-Raḍī, Nahj al-Balāgha, part III (Cairo, n.d.), p. 267.

attributed to 'Alī. Furthermore, al-Mufīd has attempted to impose some sort of order on the speeches, taking them in terms of theology and chronologically according to historical events which the speeches referred to.

Kitāb al-Irshād¹ by al-Mufīd as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

p. 119. Chapter: The speeches, sermons and sayings of 'Alī briefly quoted.

Section (al-faṣl) No. 1. In the necessity of knowing God and believing in his Unity and the negating of all ajectival comparisons of Him [with the things He has created].

The speech of 'Alī quoted under this section can be compared with sermon No. 1 (al-Mufīd's text: sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and the sermon No. 184 (al-Mufīd's text: sentences 15 and 16). The second tradition of the same section (i.e. a man came to 'Alī and asked him: Tell me, do you see your God when you worship him?), in Nahj al-Balāgha this man has been identified as Dhi'lib al-Yamānī, Sermon No. 177, vol. 1, and 'Alī's answer appears to be the same as rendered by al-Mufīd.

Section 2. His ('Alī's) speech in praise of the learned; classification of the people; advantages of knowledge and the act of acquiring it and concerning wisdom. Under

1. Printed at Qum, n.d.

this section 'Alī's address to Kumail b. Ziyād al-Nakha'ī is quoted by al-Mufīd. Almost verbatim, the same has been reported in the Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 147, vol. 3.

Section 5. His speech concerning the innovators and those who when giving judgements expressed their own views as opposed to the religious ones, etc. Now here is the example where the accounts of al-Mufīd and al-Raḍī are quite different from each other. They agree in only the opening sentence of the speech, viz, dhimmatī bimā aqūl rahīna (al-Mufīd: p. 123; Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 16, p. 42). The sentence, innahū lā yahīju 'alā al-taqwā zar' qawmin wa lā yazma' 'anhu sinkh aṣl (al-Mufīd, ibid.) has been rendered by Nahj al-Balāgha (ibid.) as: lā yuhlik 'alā al-taqwā sinkh aṣl wa lā yazma' 'alaihā zar' qawmin. The sentence: wa inna al-khair kullahū fiman 'araf qadrahū does not appear in Nahj al-Balāgha. The next sentence, viz, wa kafā bil mar'i jahla 'an lā ya'rifa qadrahū, however, does. The next part of the speech, beginning inna abghaḍ al-khalq ilā Allāh ta'ālā rajulun wakkalahū Allāh ilā nafsihī... appears in No. 17 (Nahj al-Balāgha, p. 47, vol. 1), but parts with it in the closing sentences. Al-Mufīd has 'Alī quoting the tradition innī tārik fīkum al-thaqalain mā in tammasktum bihimā lan taḍillū ba'dī kitāb Allāh wa 'itratī ahl baitī.... But this tradition does not appear in Nahj al-Balāgha.

Section 6. His speech describing the world (as opposed to the Hereafter). This is the letter 'Alī addressed to Salmān al-Fārisī and it appears in augmented form in the letter No. 68 in the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha. It has been repeated in the chapter of the "Wise Sayings" (No. 119) of the book.

Section 7. His speech in connection with getting equipped for the next world.... It appears in the second volume of Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 202 (p. 209), with slight variation.

Section 8. Inviting people to devote their lives to the service of God.... It is recorded in the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 267, p. 217, up to the sentence: yātiy Allāh fīhi birizqika; No. 192, p. 196, the sentence: mā kasabta fawqa qūtika fa anta fīhi khāzin li ghairika; the last two lines or so of the speech do not appear to be in the book.

Section 9. His speech famous amongst the learned and memorised by the intelligent and the wise. Here what al-Mufīd has quoted as one speech, al-Raḍī's record shows that this speech may have been delivered in two parts and on two separate occasions. It appears in Nahj al-Balāgha in sermon No. 28, p. 66, and then (the latter part) in sermon No. 42, p. 88, both in the first volume. There is slight variation in the texts rendered by al-Raḍī. A part of it appears in the entry No. 120, vol. 1.

Section 11. In description of his devoted followers.

What al-Mufīd records in this section may possibly be the part of the speech No. 119 in the first volume of Nahj al-Balāgha, p. 233.

Section 12. His speech concerning the end of man (al-mawt).

The first part of the speech quoted under this section appears in No. 121, p. 3, vol. 2; the second in No. 143, p. 38, vol. 2, except the last sentence beginning innā
ku^hliqnā wa antum lilbaqā' lā lil fanā'....

Section 13. His speech in calling people to his cause, etc.

This speech has also been quoted by Abū 'Ubaida Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (d. 210) and al-Jāhiz (d. 255) (see Chapter III, respective sections). Al-Mufīd comments that this sermon has been quoted by all, the Sunnites and the Shī'ites. His naming Ma'mar particularly indicates that he may have been his source. Al-Sharīf mentions it in the latter part of the sermon No. 16, vol. 1, but the major part of it he leaves out.

Section 16. His speech when some of the people (viz,

'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Muḥammad b. Maslama, Ḥassān b. Thābit and Usāma b. Zaid) refrained from performing the bai'at. It has been partly quoted in No. 134, vol. 2, p. 26.

Section 17. His speech when Talḥa and Zubair broke the oath of fealty to him and went away to Mecca to join hands with 'Ā'isha.... Eliminating the names, al-Raḍī quotes a part of it in No. 54, vol. 1, p. 99.

Section 20. On his way to al-Baṣra he stopped at al-Rabḥa...
See sermon No. 33, vol. 1, p. 76.

Section 23. His speech on leaving Dhū Qār on his way to al-Baṣra. Sermons No. 10, p. 33, vol. 1, and No. 22, p. 55, vol. 1, have the contents of the speech quoted by al-Mufīd under this section. The collector repeats apparently the same speech in vol. 2, No. 135.

Section 25. His speech at the time Talḥa had been killed and the opposing army scattered. Sermon No. 4, p. 33, vol. 1, with slight variation.

Sections 32, 33, 34, and the first part of 35. In exhorting his army at the time of war. Extracts of the speeches quoted in the above sections, with some additions and omissions, are recorded by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī under the sermon No. 122, vol. 2, p. 4.

The latter part of Section 35. Sermon No. 56, vol. 1, p. 100; al-Raḍī does not say when the speech was delivered.

Section 36. His speech to his companions when they returned from the battle of Ṣiffīn. This sentence: la qad fa'altum fi'lat da'da'at min al-Islām quwāh wa

asqatāt munnatahū wa awrathat wahna, according to al-Mufīd, refers to their acceptance of al-Tahkīm. While al-Raḍī quotes it on the occasion when 'Alī had been given the people's oath of fealty (Sermon 168, p. 98, vol. 2). Then the sentence is in the mood of proscription: wa lā taf'alū fi'lat tada'da' qūwat wa tusqit munnat wa tūrith wahna wa dhillat.

Section 38. His address to al-Khawārij when he returned to al-Kūfa and it appears that he delivered it before he entered it (al-Kūfa). The part of the sermon recorded by al-Mufīd in this section and which begins: inna lam nuḥakkim al-rijāl, etc., has been copied by al-Raḍī in No. 123, p. 7, vol. 2. The rest of the contents can be identified in the sermon or the address No. 120, p. 2, vol. 2, although the wording of al-Sharīf is, for the most part, different.

Section 39. His speech when Mu'āwiya broke his treaty. The last sentences of the speech have been quoted in 'Alī's address to the people of al-Kūfa, No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113.

Section 41. His speech over the delaying tactics of some of his supporters in the war with Mu'āwiya. This speech may have also been copied by al-Sharīf from al-Mufīd, as it appears verbatim in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 29, vol. 1, p. 69.

Section 42. His speech in connection with the same as described above. The last paragraph (or part): wa ka-annī anzuru ilaikum takhashshunā, etc., appears in sermon No. 121, vol. 2, p. 4.

Section 45. His address to the people of al-Kūfa for the aforesaid purpose (i.e. in sections 41 and 42). Cf. sermon No. 25, vol. 1, p. 60: wa inni wa-Allāh lā azunnu anna hā'ulā'i al-qawm sa yudālūna minkum, etc.; and sermon No. 95, vol. 1, p. 188: laqad aṣbahat al-umam takhāfu zulama ru'ātihā, etc.

Section 46. His speech on another occasion. On the evidence provided by some of the writers of the third century, like al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255) and al-Dīnawarī (d. 280), al-Mufīd has mixed up a number of addresses and has rendered them as one speech in this section. The parts of this speech are, therefore, contained by several sermons in Nahj al-Balāgha and here is the list of them: No. 25, vol. 1, p. 59; No. 26, vol. 1, p. 63; No. 28, vol. 1, p. 69; No. 34, vol. 1, p. 78; No. 39, vol. 1, p. 86; No. 67, vol. 1, p. 113; No. 69, vol. 1, p. 115; and finally, No. 95, vol. 1, p. 186.

Section 50. (From) 'Alī through Ibn 'Abbās -- an address which has been recorded by a group of ahl al-naql through several routes (al-turuq).... The address quoted under this introduction is the address known as "al-shiqshiqīya". There is little variation in the text from that which appears in Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 3, vol. 1, p. 25.

Section 52. This has been narrated from Mus'ida b. Sadaqa through Abū 'Abd Allāh.... A shorter version of this speech is contained in sermon No. 86, vol. 1, p. 154.

Section 54. His sayings -- wise and philosophical....
Cf. No. 201, vol. 2, p. 209; No. 131, vol. 3, p. 182;
No. 82, vol. 3, p. 183; No. 298, vol. 3, p. 225; No. 392, vol. 3, p. 248; No. 396, vol. 3, p. 249; No. 408, vol. 3, p. 251.

Section 55. His speech on the definition of man. Man's weaknesses: No. 108, vol. 3, p. 175; No. 174, vol. 2, p. 116; wisdom and ignorance: No. 54, vol. 3, p. 164.

3. Kitāb al-Jamal

It concerns, as its title suggests, the Battle of the Camel. However, the book is not primarily a historical work and is concerned with many theological issues.

Kitāb al-Jamal¹ by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nu'mān al-Mufīd (d. 413 A.H.), as one of the possible sources of Nahj al-Balāgha:

p. 46, source: 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 3, vol. 1, p. 25.

p. 48, source: Abū Mikhnaf, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 90, vol. 1, p. 182.

1. Printed at Najaf, n.d.

- p. 76, source: "the well-known", cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 215, vol. 2, p. 227.
- p. 84, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 162, vol. 2, pp. 84-86.
- p. 116, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 1, vol. 3, p. 2.
- p. 122, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 227, vol. 2, p. 249.
- p. 128, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 135, vol. 2, pp. 26-29.
- p. 129, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 10, vol. 1, p. 38.
- p. 159, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 8, vol. 1, p. 38.
- p. 141, source: al-Madā'inī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 9, vol. 1, p. 38.
- pp. 174-75, source: al-Wāqidī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 121, vol. 2, p. 4.
- p. 203, source: Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 13, vol. 1, p. 41.
- p. 209, source: al-Wāqidī, cf. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 76, vol. 3, p. 149.

al-Shiqshiqīyah -- Address No. 3

Out of the 239 speeches that have been recorded in Nahj al-Balāgha and which have been dealt with as a whole in the previous chapter, the address No. 3, known as al-Shiqshiqīyah, however, needs to be discussed separately. For it was this address, quoting which Ibn Taimīyah lodged his demand for isnād and it was this address to which al-Dhahabī was referring when he said:

One who reads Nahj al-Balāgha knows for certain that it has been forged and attributed to Amīr al-Mu'minīn, may God be pleased with him, because in it there is the patent curse and the degradation of, the two leaders, Abū Bakr and 'Umar, may God be pleased with both of them.¹

Then al-Dhahabī proceeds to point out there were things of lowliness (al-ashyā' al-rakīkah) in the book. Here again there is the strong possibility that he was referring to al-Shiqshiqīyah, for there is no other sermon or address in Nahj al-Balāgha which speaks in derisory terms about other Companions of the Prophet. Modern criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha has also al-Shiqshiqīyah as one of its main targets. "The abusive language, cursing, and revilings of the Companions," writes Ṣafā

1. al-Dhahabī, Mīzān al-I'tidāl (Cairo, 1943), p. 124.

Khulūṣī, "especially in the famous Shiqshiqīyah are not attributable to a pious and God-fearing Imam like Ali. He strongly resented the cursing of the Companions..."¹

It is, therefore, necessary that a translation of the text of al-Shiqshiqīyah be rendered in English so that the reader may be able to grasp the full meanings of allusions and references that have been made to it. It is also hoped that the discussion that follows will be better understood if the text is laid out before the reader.

The translation of the third address in part one of Nahj al-Balāgha, which is known as al-Shiqshiqīyah, is as follows:

"Lo, by God, ^{Ibn}Abū Quḥāfah [Abū Bakr, the first Caliph] has worn it [the caliphate] like a shirt! Knowing full well that my position to it is like that of the pivot to a mill! It is from me that the inundations of [knowledge] spring. And it is to me that the flights of the fliers fail to reach. [However,] I let the curtains be drawn [on the issue, postponing my claim] and allowed my attention to wander away from it. I found myself confronted with two courses of action of either proceeding to [press] my claim with the hand that had been cut or bearing the darkness that was blinding, with fortitude. Although the nature of that darkness was

1. Ṣafā Khulūṣī, "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha", Islamic Review, October, 1950, pp. 31-35.

such which made young old, and old decrepit; and it made the believer struggle all the while before he met his creator. [However,] I saw that to remain patient was the better of the two courses and did so experiencing the agonies of the person who has a mote or a speck in his eye; or the agony of a person who has a bone or the like stuck in his throat! Seeing that my inheritance was being plundered. [This state of affairs remained until] the first [Caliph] passed away; but not before he had passed it [the caliphate] on to ['Umar, the second Caliph. Then 'Alī quoted the poem of al-A'shā, which is:]

Oh, what a difference
between the two days of mine;
the one, on the barren back of the mount,
the other, with the friend Ḥayyān [and wine].

But how amazing! For while he [the first Caliph] was wanting to be relieved ^{of} ~~of~~ it [i.e. the caliphate] in his lifetime, he gifted it to someone else after his death.¹ How grave became the matter as they [Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the first and second Caliphs] shared the udders of it [the caliphate] between them! They place it in a position where its wounds became severe, its holding became harder; the mistakes and the stumbles

1. Allusion to the reported speech of the first Caliph, Abū Bakr: "Aqīlūnī fa lastu bi khairikum" (i.e. Relieve me of the burden of the Caliphate for I am not the best of you); Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. I (Cairo, 1959), p. 169.

more frequent; and the explaining [for the errors] more sought after. The rider of the Caliphate is like the rider of the unruly mount. If he pulls the reigns of it, he injures its nose but if he lets them go, the mount lands him in the abodes of hazards even death! People, by God, have been tested with this [kind of] deviation and off course treadings and the changing from (one attitude to another]. I remained patient despite the length of time and the hardness of the ordeal till [the time when] the [second Caliph, 'Umar] passed away, but before that he placed it [the Caliphate] in a group he thought were my equals! Oh God, what has it got to do with al-Shūrā [the electoral college]! When was there any doubt about my being [equal to the task] with the first of them so that now I was to be compared with the like of these people!¹ [However, I went along with them], flying when they flew and landing when they landed. [But what actually happened in the committee was that] one was prevented by the ill will he bore against me² and the other³ opted for his brother-in-law, along with other

-
1. Allusion to the members of the Electoral College appointed by the Second Caliph, 'Umar; they were: 'Alī, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaid Allāh, Zubair ibn al-'Awwām.
 2. Allusion to Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (according to the commentator, al-Rawandī) and Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaid Allāh, according to Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 189.
 3. Allusion to 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who was married to 'Uthmān's sister; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, ibid.

unspeakable things. In the end, the third of the group [meaning the third Caliph, 'Uthmān) stood up, thrusting his breast forward from the point of intake of fodder to its exit. With him stood his brothers [all, eventually,] eating up what belonged to God, like eating of a camel of the greenery of the spring harvest! Till the rope [of his life] was broken and his deeds led to his assassination and he fell, being a victim of his stomach! Before long I found myself surrounded by people, coming in from every direction. The crowd became so intense and unruly that Ḥasan and Ḥusain were trampled and my mantle torn at the sides; people, pouring in around me like a flock of sheep. But when I stood up with the task, lo, there was one group who broke their pledge of loyalty¹; the other went astray² and yet another remained stuck with their crime of injustice! As if they had never heard the Word of God: ["That is the abode of the hereafter which has been reserved for those who do not rise in rebellion on earth nor do they propagate corruption. Verily, the happy end is for those who fear God!"]³ Yes, they heard it and heard it well. But the world appeared sweeter in their eyes and they were taken in by its ornaments and the make up! I swear by One Who

-
1. Allusion to Ṭalḥa and Zubair and their followers, who fought 'Alī at the Battle of al-Jamal.
 2. Allusion to Mu'āwiyah and his followers, who fought 'Alī at Ṣiffīn.
 3. Qur'ān, al-Fath, 10.

cleaves the seed and brings into life that which breathes, were it not for those [who offered their services and begged me to stand for the office[and the termination of the previous excuses [for not standing for the office] by now availability of support, and the fact that God has taken the pledge from the learned and the powerful not to allow the atrocities of the oppressors or the agonies of the oppressed to continue, I would swing back the rope to where it belonged and would have treated the matter in the same manner as in the beginning of it. You would have found then that this world of yours, in my eyes, is less significant than the sneeze of a goat."¹

They said [the tradition continues], that at this point a man from al-Sawād [i.e. Iraq] stood up and handed 'Alī a piece of paper and 'Alī started to look at it. Afterwards Ibn 'Abbās said: "O Commander of the Faithful, ^{only} if you would resume the address from where you terminated it." Thereupon 'Alī replied: "Haihāt, tilka shiqshiqat inḥadarat thumma qarrat [Alas; it has now gone! It was like the faucal bag of the camel coming out with its anger but settling back once the excitement was over!]"²

This then is the full text of the address. Earlier we noted al-Dhahabī's remarks about there being degradation of the first Caliph, Abū Bakr and the second Caliph,

1. The end of the text of al-Shiqshiqīyah.

2. Nahj al-Balāgha, part one (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 25-33.

'Umar. What he did not say is the fact that there is the degradation of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān, too, as the above translation brings out. This attitude is not reflected in any other of 'Alī's speeches quoted in Nahj al-Balāgha. In fact there are examples where the contrary can be proved,¹ as we shall see further on in this chapter.

Since this is the only khutbah in Nahj al-Balāgha which seems to fall in line with their doctrine of al-tabarrī (i.e. repudiation of the first three Caliphs), the Shī'ites have regarded it as one of the important addresses of 'Alī. Muḥammad ibn Nu'mān, better known as al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), has the following to say about it:

And the address which has been transmitted through Ibn 'Abbās is so well known that there is no need to support it through other means [i.e. isnād, etc.]. It is the address in the beginning of which he says: Amā wallāh laqad taqamaṣahā
ibn Abī Quhāfah...²

Mulla Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) quotes the address with isnād, copying it from Sa'īd ibn Hibat Allāh, better known as Qaṭb al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177), who is said to have quoted it in his commentary

1. For example, see the address No. 226, Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, p. 249.

2. al-Mufīd, al-Jamal (Najaf, n.d.), pp. 46-47.

of Nahj al-Balāgha, known as Minhāj al-Barā'ah (q.v. Chapter two -- Commentaries). Majlisī also points out that the same address has been quoted by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in the fourth volume of al-'Iqd al-Farīd. But the address does not seem to appear in the present editions of the book. However, al-Khaṭīb claims that it was the hands of the interested parties which eliminated it from the book either at the time of copying it from another manuscript or at the time of its printing.¹ In any event, it seems that Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258), who devotes the entire twelfth volume of his commentary in praising and defending the second Caliph, 'Umar, against the attacks on him by the Shī'ites, however, seems to be convinced of the authenticity of al-Shiqshiqīyah, as he comments on the address in the following words:

I was told by my tutor [shaikhī] Muṣṣadiq ibn Shabīb al-Wāsiṭī [d. 605/1208] in 603 [A.H.] that he had read the address [i.e. al-Shiqshiqīyah] with al-Shaikh Abī Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, better known as Ibn al-Khashshāb [d. 567/1171]. When Ibn al-Khashshāb reached the point [where Ibn 'Abbās is quoted to have said that he had never regretted an abrupt

1. al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. I (Beirut, 1975), p. 312.

interruption of any other speech as he did that which interrupted the Shiqshiqīyah], he said that had he heard Ibn 'Abbās make that remark he would have told him: "Was there anything more to be said by your cousin so that you regret the termination of the speech? By God, he had neither spared the forebearers nor the late-comers! Nor was there anyone in his heart he did not mention except the Prophet of God!" Ibn Khashshāb, said Muṣṣādiq, was a man with a sense of humour [as his above remarks have indicated]. So Muṣṣādiq asked him: "So, do you say that this address was forged?" Ibn Khashshāb replied: "By God, no. For I know that this is of his as I know that you are Muṣṣādiq." Muṣṣādiq said to Ibn Khashshāb that people were saying that it was of al-Raḍī, to which he replied: "How could it be of al-Raḍī or of anybody else? We have come across the writing of al-Raḍī and have known his style in prose and that compared with this piece of prose, is neither here nor there! I have come across this address in the books which were written before al-Raḍī's birth by two hundred years. I found the address

written down in the handwritings I knew, of the learned and the literary [people who flourished] before the time of Abū Aḥmad, the father of al-Raḍī."

Having quoted that, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd adds:

I myself have found most of the address in the books of Abū al-Qāsim al-Balākhī, who was active in the reign of al-Muqtadir [the 'Abbāsid Caliph, 296-320/908-932], that is a long time before al-Raḍī was born. I have also found the major portion of it in the books of one of the Imamite theologians, Abū Ja'far ibn Qibbah, which is called al-Insāf, and which is well known. Ibn Qibbah was one of the pupils of Abū al-Qāsim al-Balākhī and he also died a long time before al-Raḍī's birth.¹

Quoting all the above but without naming Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (!), Ibn Maitham (d. 679/1280), the Shī'ite commentator of Nahj al-Balāgha, adds that he had also seen the address (al-Shiqshiqīyah) written in the handwriting of 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, commonly known as Ibn al-Furāt, the minister of the said 'Abbāsid Caliph, al-Muqtadir. That, Ibn Maitham points out, "was one hundred and sixty-two years before al-Raḍī's birth."²

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 206.

2. Ibn Maitham, Sharh Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. I (Tehran, 1368/1948), pp. 252-53.

Then comes the important evidence of the Arabic lexicographers. Amongst them first comes Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1209) who, at the mention of the word al-Shiqshiqah, remembers the address and remarks: "And this word has been used by 'Alī in [one of] his address; [the sentence this word has been used in being] tilka shiqshiqat inḥadarat thumma qarrat."¹ Similar entries are made by Muḥammad ibn Mukarram, better known as Ibn al-Manẓūr, (d. 630/1232), in his Lisān al-'Arab²; al-Fīrozabādī (d. 817/1414) in his al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt.³

However, my investigations lead me to believe that like the book, the claim to the total authenticity of the address known as al-Shiqshiqīyah can not be substantiated. In the following I shall try to examine the issue as objectively as I am able to. The areas which point against the belief in the total authenticity of al-Shiqshiqīyah are as follows:

1. The evidence of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd and Ibn Maitham, even the vague statement of Ibn Khashshāb, takes the address to the third century or, if Ibn Khashshāb is right, to somewhere in the second century, but no further.

1. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar, vol. II (Cairo, 1963), p. 490.

2. Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab, vol. XII (Bulāq, 1301), p. 53.

3. Firuzabādī, al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt, vol. 3 (Beirut,), p. 59.

2. None of the lexicographers have quoted the address but only have alluded to it. Thus only one sentence, i.e. tilka shiqshiqat inhadarat thumma qarrat, may be assumed to have been said by 'Alī. It may also be accepted that based on the aforesaid sentence the address was called al-Shiqshiqīyah, but all that would be far from proving the total authenticity.

3. While the historical evidence proves that at the time of Muḥammad's death 'Alī saw in himself the prime contender for the office, he seems to have accepted the prevailing situation eventually. The tradition of Jundab ibn 'Abd Allāh, quoted by al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), seems to be the true indicator as to how 'Alī read the situation at that time and what were his reasons for not opposing it actively. In the tradition Jundab exhorts 'Alī to call people to his cause, saying that even if only ten per cent of the people answered, that would be sufficient and 'Alī replied that he did not expect even two per cent to rally to his call because "People look to Quraish and the Quraish say that the lineage of Muḥammad think that of all the people, they are the chosen ones; and thus the most worthy claimants to the Caliphate. [The case being so] if one of them is [elected or nominated as Caliph] then the Caliphate will never pass to anyone else."¹ When Jundab offered to canvass the people on his behalf, 'Alī forbade him to do so, "because," 'Alī said, "this is not the time for

1. al-Mufīd, al-Irshād (Tehran, 1377/1957), p. 116.

it." In another tradition, 'Alī is more specific: "By God, if I were not afraid of creating divisions amongst the Muslims and turning them or most of them infidels yet again, or [if I were not afraid of causing] reversion in religion, we would have changed the position to the extent of our ability."¹ And the very same reasons appear in the speech quoted by al-Madā'inī (d. 225/839): "By God, if there were no fear of dividing the Muslims, the return of faithlessness, and of causing reversion in religion, our position would have been different from what it was."² While the text rendered by al-Kalbī (d. 204/819) states: "When God took away His prophet from amongst us, the Quraishites by-passed us, appropriating the government for themselves. Preventing us from acquiring what was ours by right more than anyone else's. But I saw that to remain patient and forego the right was far better than shedding the blood of Muslims and causing divisions amongst them..."³ The common factors in all these early reported speeches of 'Alī are, firstly, that 'Alī had no doubts that he was the rightful contender amongst all the people, for the Caliphate; secondly, that he preferred to forego the claim in favour of the unity amongst Muslims and, thirdly, that although all the speeches quoted above

1. al-Mufīd, al-Irshād, pp. 117-18.

2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., p. 307.

3. Ibid., pp. 308-09.

have one theme, viz injustices done in the past, the language is very different from al-Shiqshiqīyah.

4. Whatever has been said in al-Shiqshiqīyah about the first Caliph, Abū Bakr, and the second Caliph, 'Umar, (q.v. translation of the address) does not conform to the historical facts. Nor does it conform to the speech in praise of the second Caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, by 'Alī and reported in Nahj al-Balāgha.¹

In conclusion, it may be said that in view of the speeches quoted by early historians like al-Madā'inī and al-Kalbī, and in view of the fact that the contents of those speeches more or less conform with the contents of al-Shiqshiqīyah, the address is not historically ^{ie} ~~bas~~ ^{le} ~~ss~~. Yet it is likely that in Nahj al-Balāgha 's al-Shiqshiqīyah, the language, stating the same claim as made elsewhere, has been hardened and thus made unattributable to the person 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib was.

The Covenant of 'Alī

In the section of Nahj al-Balāgha which deals with the letters and the written documents by 'Alī, the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, introduces the 'Ahd which, according to the collector, 'Alī wrote for al-Ashtar al-Nakha'ī (d. 38/658) when he appointed him as the

1. Address No. 226, Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2, p. 206, and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd's commentary on it, vol. XII, pp. 3-4.

governor of Egypt and its districts at the time when under Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, the previous governor, the disorder and disruption began to appear and the control of the situation seemed to be slipping from his hands. "This," adds the collector, "is the longest 'Ahd of 'Alī and the embodiment of all the merits which are contained by other of his writings."¹

The word "'Ahd" has been translated as "covenant". But since the word "covenant" meaning contract or treaty, suggests two equal parties, the word "'Ahd" may simply be translated as "the written instructions". For then the authority of the giver over the receiver, as is understood by the word "'Ahd", will be manifested. On the other hand, the Biblical Covenant between God and the Israelites, where the two parties are not equal, may have been the source of the present translation of the 'Ahd as "covenant."

However, 'Ahd is the branch of the classical Arabic prose which goes back to the time of Muḥammad. Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 817/1418) discusses the two styles of 'Ahd writing by the Muslim prose writers of the Middle Ages. The one patterned itself on the method and the style of the 'uhūd (i.e. covenants) of Muḥammad and 'Alī, while the other, that of the modern writers (of his time) on that of Shaikh Shahāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī. Opening

1. al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Nahj al-Balāgha, part 3 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 92.

his discussion on the first category of 'Ahd writing, al-Qalqashandī quotes the 'Ahd Muḥammad wrote, or had it written, for 'Amr ibn Ḥazm when deputing the latter to Yaman. For his source of the 'Ahd, al-Qalqashandī quotes Ibn Hishām and others.¹ The second "model" 'Ahd which follows that of Muḥammad is the 'Ahd of 'Alī to al-Ashtar. Although al-Qalqashandī quotes only a part of it (about one-quarter) the text conforms with the text given in Nahj al-Balāgha . However, al-Qalqashandī quotes Ibn Ḥamdūn (d. 562/1166) as his source, and not al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, the collector.² At this point it would be relevant to pay due attention to al-Qaḍī's observation that it was noteworthy that al-Qalqashandī does not mention the 'Ahd among the testaments of the Rāshidūn Caliphs, but quoted its introductory sections on the authority of Ibn Ḥamdūn as the method of writing testaments.³ In my view there are a number of reasons which interpret this attitude of al-Qalqashandī in favour of the 'Ahd under discussion rather than the opposite, as al-Qaḍī contends.

(a) Al-Qalqashandī, quoting the 'Ahd of 'Alī to al-Ashtar, side by side with that of Muḥammad, and quoting both the covenants as the model of the classical 'Ahd writing, has, in the strongest terms, acknowledged the authority of the 'Ahd.

1. al-Qalqashandī, Subḥ al-A'shā, vol. 10 (Cairo, 1916), p. 9.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

3. W. al-Qaḍī, "An Early Fatimid Political Document", Studia Islamica, XLVIII (1978), p. 79.

(b) He quotes it to the extent with which he is satisfied that the "pattern" has been established. But having established the pattern, he proceeds to quote the 'Ahd of Abū Ishāq al-Ṣabī (d. 384/994) which he composed for the Caliph al-Tā'i in 366/976 addressed to Fakhr al-Dawlah (d. 344/955), in full. The other 'Ahd al-Qalqashandī reports fully is the 'Ahd of Amīn al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd al-'Alā ibn Wahb which he composed for the Caliph, al-Qā'im bi Amr Allāh and addressed to Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn, on entrusting the latter with the governments of North Africa and Spain after the year 420/1029. The common factor in all the cited covenants being that they were styled on the covenants of 'Alī's 'Ahd under discussion.

(c) Of the masters (al-shuyūkh) of the Syro-Egyptian school of the seventh and the eighth centuries of the Islamic era, there was much which had made Nahj al-Balāgha and its contents common knowledge among the intelligentsia and had shaped its positive views, whether in favour of it or against it. The latter has been discussed at some length in this thesis in Chapter II. But the example of the former is Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwairī (d. 733/1332). This al-Nuwairī was one of al-Qalqashandī's shuyūkh who had produced the 'Ahd in full, with a comment which may have influenced al-Qalqashandī to select it to serve as the "model" in his book. Those remain^r~~ers~~ of al-Nuwairī are as follows:

In whatever I have read so far by way of al-waṣāyah [the commands, directives] and 'Ahd [covenant], there is nothing more comprehensive, more universal and more complete than the 'Ahd which 'Alī wrote for Mālīk ibn al-Ashtar al-Ḥārithī when he appointed him as the governor of Egypt. And so I wish to record it in full, neither leaving out the fullness of its details nor the import of its finer objectives. Because an 'Ahd like this one is not to be overlooked nor its priority and urgency to be lost through ignorance.¹

Al-Nuwairī's orthodoxy may be noted by the fact that he copied al-Sahīh of Imām al-Bukhārī eight times with his own hands, a distinction specifically pointed out by another erudite orthodox Sunnī historian, Taghrī Burdī.² Thus the likelihood of the Orthodox Mamlūk School, which served as the source of doubts in the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha in the Middle Ages, seemed, however, convinced of the authenticity of the 'Ahd. It is noteworthy that wherever the 'Ahd appears in the writings of the Mamlūk Syro-Egyptian scholars, no references are made to Nahj al-Balāgha.

-
1. Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwairī, Nihāyat al-'Arab, vol. 6 (Cairo, 1925), p. 19.
 2. Taghrī Burdī, al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, vol. 9 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 299.

Even the Shī'ite al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) does not refer to Nahj al-Balāgha when he mentions the 'Ahd. In the biographical note on al-Aṣḥab ibn Nubātīh, al-Ṭūsī says that he was one of the close companions of 'Alī and he related the 'Ahd 'Alī wrote for Mālik al-Ashtar al-Nakha'ī when he appointed him. He also related the waṣīyah (i.e. the will, the directives, etc.) of 'Alī to his son Muḥammad al-Ḥanafīyah.¹ Al-Ṭūsī was following the pattern which had been set earlier vis-a-vis the 'Ahd of treating it independently of Nahj al-Balāgha. This was shown in the writings of Miskawaih (d. 429/1037) and al-Qādī al-Qudā'ī (d. 454/1062). Now considering that Nahj al-Balāgha was completed in 400/1009 and the collector's death in 406/1015, all the aforesaid scholars could have referred to both the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, and the book, Nahj al-Balāgha. But they do not, indicating that their source was other than Nahj al-Balāgha. Here al-Qadī seems to be right when he states: "The Nahj recension, however, must have existed some decades [sic] before the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century." This is ascertained by the fact that Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī, who died in 381/992, reproduces about twenty citations from it, all of which are introduced by "'Alī said to al-Ashtar", and adds at one instance, "when he sent him to Egypt".²

1. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, al-Fihrist (Mashhad, 1351 Shamsī), pp. 62-63.

2. W. al-Qadī, op. cit., p. 75.

More important than Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, to whom al-Qāḍī has referred, is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī, better known as Ibn Shuʿbah, who was active in the first half of the fourth century. His date of death is not certain. What seems to be certain is that he was the contemporary of al-Shaikh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) and references to him are made by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmulī.

Al-Majlisī and, in this century, Agha Buzurg Tehrānī, who quoting ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusain al-Baḥrānī, records: "One of the early Shīʿite authorities who is a source of even Muḥammad ibn Nuʿmān al-Mufīd [d. 413/1022]." One of the sources of Ibn Shuʿbah is Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Humām, who died in 336/947.¹ When I said that Ibn Shuʿbah was more important I meant that unlike the aforesaid scholars of the fourth and fifth centuries, he quotes the Covenant in full and his recension may have been the source for al-Raḍī, the collector; for it is followed, with some minor omissions, by the text of Nahj al-Balāgha both in words and in the sequence of ideas. The following are a few examples of the manner in which the recension of Nahj al-Balāgha differs from that of Ibn Shuʿbah:

(1) In the beginning of the Covenant, where the responsibilities of the governor are described, the word in Ibn Shuʿbah's text is mujāhadah whereas it appears in Nahj al-Balāgha as jihād.

1. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Ibn Shuʿbah, Tuhuf al-ʿUqul (Beirut, 1974), p. 7.

(2) wa ittibā' mā amar Allāh bihī fī kitābihī, in Nahj al-Balāgha it is wa ittibā' mā amar bihī fī kitābihī.

(3) fa innahu qad takaffal bi naṣr man naṣarahu has been changed to fa innahu jall ismuhū qad takaffal. All the changes point to one weakness, or one strength, of the collector, viz, to place the correct prepositions (which may have been the error of the scribes) and eliminate the sentences which appeared to him as less eloquent. However, this is done without the structure of the Covenant or the sequence of ideas being affected.

Nevertheless, Ibn Shu'bah's recension cannot be positively placed as the one preceding that of Qādī Nu'mān (d. 363/973) because, while we are told that "it was about the year 347/957 and during the reign of the fourth Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz li Dīn Allāh [341-365/952-975], that al-Qādī Nu'mān b. Muḥammad b. Ḥayyūn [d. 363/974] wrote his ... Da'ā'im al-Islām"¹, we cannot ascertain positively as to when Ibn Shu'bah composed his Tuhuf al-'Uqūl. Indeed, as has already been pointed out, we cannot ascertain even the date of his death. But to say that Qādī Nu'mān and Ibn Shu'bah were contemporaries would, however, not be far from the truth. Even so, because of the vast differences of the two texts, and because of the theory al-Qādī bases on the assumption of Nahj's recension of the Covenant being an adaptation of the earlier text rendered by Qādī Nu'mān², it remains

1. W. al-Qādī, op. cit., p. 71.

2. Ibid., p. 94.

important that the date of completion of Tuhuf al-‘Uqūl be known which, on the present available resources to me, does not seem feasible.

However, the answer may lie in the book called Akḥbār Ṣiffīn. It has survived in manuscript form, one copy of which, bearing number H 129, is at Ambrosiana, the other, bearing the number Q.U. 2040, is at Berlin. Both of these were edited by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥalabī at St. Andrews University (Scotland) in 1974 for the degree of Ph.D. The editor quotes Griffin¹ for the author of Akḥbār Ṣiffīn as being Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Kalbī. "This," says the editor, "is consistent with his suggestion that the beginning of this work is foll 53a because Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Kalbī is the first name in the first folio under the heading of Dhikr al-ta‘bi’a al-thānīyah al-ḥarb bi Ṣiffīn." But further on in his introduction to the book, the editor admits that there was nothing in the book itself to suggest that Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān was the author. He had tried to identify the author under the names of Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Kalbī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Imrān al-Kalbī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Uwānah al-Kalbī and Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Kūfī, but had not been able to locate the required information. Now Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Sā‘ib al-Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821) did write Kitāb Ṣiffīn, which he composed in

1. ‘Abd al-Azīz al-Ḥalabī, ed., Akḥbār Ṣiffīn, Ph.D. Thesis (University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 1974), p. 35.

the last decades of the second century and to which references are made by Ibn Nadīm in his al-Fihrist¹, and by Yāqūt in his Irshād al-Arīb², but this book is ruled out by the editor, saying:

It must also be added that Ibn al-Kalbī was unfamiliar with some of the authorities quoted in this work, such as 'Umar ibn Sa'd, 'Amr ibn Shamir, al-Ju'fī, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṣadaqah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qāshī. Al-Kalbī usually transmits the material from Abū Mikhnaḥ and to a lesser degree, his father, [Muḥammad ibn Sā'ib] and 'Uwānah ibn al-Ḥakam al-Kalbī.³

Going through Akḥbār Ṣiffīn, one is at once struck by the similarity of contents, even style, between Akḥbār Ṣiffīn and Waq'at Ṣiffīn of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212/827). Both open up with 'Alī's arrival in Kufah after the battle of al-Jamal. Both report 'Alī's conversations with some of the Kufan leaders who failed to join him at al-Baṣrah. Both record the subsequent events leading to the battle of Ṣiffīn. What is more important in many cases is the self-sameness of isnād.

-
1. Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrist (trans. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 206.
 2. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 36.
 3. Ibid., p. 37.

Following are the common sources of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and the author of Akḥbār Siffīn: 'Amr ibn Shamir; 'Umar ibn Sa'd; al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥaṣīrah; 'Amr ibn Salamah; Yahyā ibn Salamah; al-Ṣaq'ab ibn Zuhair; Jābir al-Ju'fī; al-Kalbī; 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd; Abū Rūq al-Hamadānī, and others. Although the degree of references to them varies, as the editor of Akḥbār Siffīn points out, 'Amr ibn Shamir, for example, appears thirty-six times in Naṣr's Waq'at Siffīn, whereas he is referred to only four times by the author of Akḥbār Siffīn.¹ But on account of the many similarities, could Akḥbār Siffīn be another recension of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's Waq'at Siffīn? The editor of the former book answers in the negative, and he gives the following reasons for it: "It is probable that the author of Akḥbār Siffīn was a contemporary of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim or comparatively younger because the youngest known source in Akḥbār Siffīn is Ḥaṭḥam ibn 'Adī (d. 207/822)." However, the strong resemblance to Waq'at Siffīn and the self-sameness of some of the contents are taken account of as the editor adds:

Unless the author of Akḥbār Siffīn shared with Naṣr a common source, he must, then, have used Naṣr's material particularly in the first part of Akḥbār Siffīn and deliberately suppressed Naṣr's name.²

1. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 40.

2. Ibid., p. 50.

Then the factors separating the two works are cited and listed as:

(a) The information provided by Akhbār Šiffīn on some matters is in much more detail than in Naṣr's Waq'at Šiffīn and at this point 'Alī's dismissal of Ash'ath ibn Qais from the leadership over al-Kindah and Rabī'ah is cited as an example.¹

(b) Ṣa'ṣa'ah's mission to Mu'āwiyah, which Naṣr does not mention, nor does anybody else, according to the editor's information.²

(c) The second part of Akhbār Šiffīn deals with the disposition of the two armies at Šiffīn. Here the author of Akhbār Šiffīn provides "the fullest information" and "the first ever" illustrations of the banners of the tribes who participated in the battle of Šiffīn. At this point the editor observes that if there were no other reasons, this feature of the book alone would have justified the project.³ In all there are forty-four "beautiful illustrations" of the banners. The first four are the banners of Muḥammad and the tribe of Quraish and the rest are those of the tribes which took part in the battle of Šiffīn. The source the author of Akhbār Šiffīn used in describing the shapes and the hues of the banners of Muḥammad and the tribe of Quraish, is Ibn

1. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 51.

2. Ibid., p. 56.

3. Ibid., p. 58.

Ishāq and the transmitter of the traditions Haitham ibn 'Adī. The editor of Akhhbār Siffīn states that he has compared these reports with their parallel ones reported by Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/768) and found them to be identical.¹

(d) The author of Akhhbār Siffīn also provides the Shi'ār (translated by the editor of Akhhbār Siffīn) as the distinctive slogans of every tribe, which did not usually exceed three words.²

Yet another separating factor of the two books is the fact that while Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim terminates his book at the conclusion of the episode of al-Taḥkīm, the author of Akhhbār Siffīn proceeds to mention the appointments of Qais ibn Sa'd, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and Mālīk al-Ashtar as the respective governors of Egypt. This appears to the editor of Akhhbār Siffīn as "irrelevant" to the battle of Siffīn. But it would cease to be so if one bears in mind that while Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim looked at the "event" (i.e. the battle of Siffīn) and terminated his book on its sequel (i.e. al-Taḥkīm), the author of Akhhbār Siffīn looked at the year (i.e. 38 A.H.) and recorded all that happened in it. As to the appointments of Qais ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah and Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, it may have been to introduce Mālīk al-Ashtar's predecessors, who had been appointed in the same position and for the same region by 'Alī.

1. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p. 59.

2. Ibid., p. 48.

In any event, the 'Ahd appears in Akhhbār Šiffīn and conforms with the recension of Ibn Shu'bah word for word, indicating the strong possibility of its being the source of Ibn Shu'bah's recension. Now it is open to discussion whether the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha took and edited his recension of the 'Ahd from Ibn Shu'bah's text or directly from Akhhbār Šiffīn. I assume the latter to be the case.

It has been agreed in the aforesaid thesis that the writing of the author of Akhhbār Šiffīn "represents an early stage in the development of Arabic narrative"¹ and this, coupled with the sources which have already been discussed, places the book somewhere in the second half of the second century or early third century, if the author was the second generation from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim.

1. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., p.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY BACKGROUND TO NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

A. Pre-Islamic Literature

I. The Jāhilī Poetry

The utterances of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib contained in Nahj al-Balāgha (according to the compiler, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī) and supposed to have been used as the vehicle for exerting influence over the societies they were addressed to, have parallels both in the utterances of the Jāhilī al-shā'ir, poet, the Khaṭīb (orator) and the Kāhin (soothsayer), and the Qur'ān. Since the first three provide the literary background for the latter, it would be appropriate to examine them first.

Judging by the traditions that the third and fourth century Muslim historians have preserved for us, it seems that pre-Islamic Arab societies were greatly influenced by these three. However, of these three prime movers of the society, it was the poet who came first in importance. Ibn Rashīq (d. 438/1046) illustrates the position of the Jāhilī poet in his society in the following words:

When there appeared a poet in a family of the Arabs, the other tribes round about would gather together to that family and wish them joy for their good luck. Feasts would be got ready, the women of the

tribe would join together in bands, playing upon lutes, as they were wont to do at the bridals, and the men and boys would congratulate one another; for a poet was a defence to the honour of them all, a weapon to ward off insults from their good names, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of establishing their fame forever. And they used not to wish one another joy but for three things -- the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, and the foaling of a noble mare.¹

To the ordinary members of his tribe, the poet was the spokesman of their sentiments and an interpreter of their emotions. The magnet which attracted the members of other tribes and the esteem of the general populace. He served as the identifier of his people and put them on the map of tribal importance. Physically the tribe submitted to the head of the clan, emotionally it followed the poet. Nicholson remarks,

Poetry gave life and currency to an ideal of Arabian virtue, murūwah, which, though based on tribal community of blood insisting that only ties of blood were sacred, nevertheless became an invisible

1. al-Ḥasan ibn Rashīq, al-‘Umadah (Cairo, 1955), p. 65.

bond between diverse clans, and formed,
whether consciously or not, the basis of
a national community of sentiments.¹

The means through which the powers of the poet were attained were his manipulation of words in describing the raids, in lamenting the former occupants of ruins, in portraying the beauty, the trot and the gallop of the horses, in emphasising the deadliness of the swords of his tribe and their lances; all that came together with refreshing intervals of amorous pronouncements and devotions to his beloved. The poet spoke in a language which was understandable to his listeners and in a style which enchanted the general populace.

Jāhilī poetry has come to us through collections made in the second and third centuries of the Islamic era.²

-
1. R. A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge, 1969), p. 72.
 2. Probably the first collection of the Jāhilī poetry was made by Ḥammād ibn Maisarah, generally known as Ḥammād al-Rāwiyah. According to al-Madā'inī (d. 225/839), he was the most learned, a'lam al-nās, in the wars of the Jāhilī people, the Jāhilī events, the Jāhilī poetry, the Jāhilī genealogy and the Jāhilī terminologies. When the Umayyad Caliph, Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (86-96/705-714) asked him how he came to be known as al-Rāwiyah (i.e. the transmitter), Ḥammād replied: "Because I am able to recite to you the work of every poet you know and also of the ones you do not know. [Reciting the works of the poets] in their original form so that you would be able to distinguish between the old [i.e. Jāhilī] and the new [i.e./

[i.e. Islamic and the post-Islamic]!" (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol. IV (Cairo, 1927), p. 137). The tradition goes on to say that when put to the test by Walīd, Ḥammād recited 2900 odes belonging to the Jāhilī period. Yāqūt quotes al-Aṣma'ī as saying: "Ḥammād was the most learned of the people provided he remained faithful." Yāqūt explains that what al-Aṣma'ī meant was that "provided he did not add or curtail in the poem and the events (of the Jāhilī) he narrated. For he was accused of composing poetry and attributing it to the Jāhilī poets." (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 137.) The work known as al-Mu'allaqāt al-Sab' or al-Sab' al-Tiwal is attributed to Ḥammād by most authorities in the Arabic literature. Ḥammād is said to have been born in 95/713. He died in 155/771.

2. Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī's collection, known as al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, "contains some 120 odes and fragments, chiefly from lesser pre-Islamic poets,..." (H. A. R. Gibb, Arabic Literature, [Oxford, 1963], p. 24). The collection was made at the instance of al-Manṣūr, the 'Abbāsid Caliph (d. 158/774) for the instruction of his son, al-Mahdī. al-Ḍabbī died ca. 170/786.

3. The collection of Ḥabīb ibn 'Aws al-Ṭā'ī, who is generally known as Abū Tammām, is known as al-Ḥamāsah. It is the best known collection, in which "he is more of a poet in selection than in his own poems" (R. A. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 130). Although he is said to have composed another collection, or rather "selection", of the Jāhilī poets, known as al-Fuhūl. One of the literary debates undertaken by the Islamic writers of the medieval times was the subject whether Abū Tammām was a better poet than al-Mutannabī. In fact the time at which the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, was born and lived, i.e. the latter part of the fourth century, the literary circles of Baghdad were engaged in fighting pitched battles over the/

the issue. And it is, perhaps, one of the reasons that when Abū al-Faraj came to talk about Abū Tammām in his famous Book of Songs (al-Aghānī), he found it difficult to add to so much that had already been said of Abū Tammām. However, without referring to al-Mutannabī, the writer of al-Aghānī makes it clear as to whom he thought to be the best poet of his time (Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī, vol. 16 [Cairo, n.d.], p. 384.). Abū Tammām, therefore, constitutes the valuable evidence in favour of the authenticity of the Jāhilī literature, for the collector had his own dīwān (printed in Beirut, 1889) and his al-Hamāsah attained fame through his method of selection and his personality. In his al-Hamāsah, Abū Tammām is guided by the subject matter rather than by the poets themselves. For example, the first bāb (i.e. the chapter) is called al-Hamāsah (and the collection takes its name after this chapter, meaning courage or valour) and consists of all that had been written under the subject by the Jāhilī poets down to his own time. "No one," writes Gibb, "who reads the poems preserved in the Hamāsah of Abū Tammām (or the pieces translated from it by Sir Charles Lyall) will deny that there is an art, springing out of natural feeling and popular consciousness, and expressing with vigour, with a certain wild beauty, and often with a strangely moving power, the personality of the poets and the conceptions and ideals of their age." (H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., p. 25). Abū Tammām is said to have been born in 172/788. He died in 231/845.

There are other collections, like the one which al-Buḥtarī (205-284/820-897) collected, calling it al-Hamāsah also. But his collection, either due to the fact that in his collection he is rather guided by his own taste which was not shared by others, or the fact that it came after Abū Tammām's and failed to rise above it, is amongst the less known and quoted.

And/

In many ways they have a great deal in common with Nahj al-Balāgha. They all share the same processes, viz, their existence in fragments in early works; their reliance on the oral transmissions from one generation to the next; and their laying claim to the utterances of those who lived two or three centuries before. However, the collections of the Jāhilī poets have been generally accepted by the Muslim intelligentsia. In the face of recent criticism of their authenticity, notably Ṭāḥā Ḥusain in his work Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī¹, the general academic consensus still accepts that a considerable part of these collections belongs to the period to which they were generally attributed.²

And so is the Lāmiyyat al-‘Arab, which although still taught in some of the Islamic universities for its linguistic merits, has, however, come to be regarded as the work of Khalaf ibn Ḥayyān, generally known as Khalaf al-Aḥmar (d. ca. 180/796) rather than al-Shanfara, the Jāhilī poet, to whom it had initially been attributed.

1. Ṭāḥā Ḥusain, Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī (Cairo, 1927), p. 64.
2. R. A. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 139-40: "That considerable traces of religious feelings are to be found in Pre-Islamic poetry admits of no denial," writes Nicholson, after quoting some verses of ‘Adī ibn Zayd, "but the passages in question were formerly explained as due to interpolation. This view no longer prevails. Thanks mainly to the arguments of Von Kremer, Sir Charles Lyall, and Wellhausen, it has become to be recognised (1) that in many cases the above mentioned religious feeling is not Islamic in tone; (2) that the passage in which it occurs are not Islamic in origin; and (3) that it is the natural and necessary result of the widely spread, though on the whole superficial, influence of Judaism and especially of Christianity."

The subject matter of Nahj al-Balāgha being mainly preachings, commands, Unity of God, descriptions of Holy Pilgrimage, the Angels and the images of the Qur'ān, it could not have been further apart from the themes and the subject matter of the Jāhilī poetry. Yet there are quotations from it, although infrequent, which have been employed to emphasise the point and to borrow the power the Jāhilī poetry still exerted on the minds of the people.¹ Here and there one finds some indication that a Jāhilī idea is expressed although the words and the construction of the sentences are different. The sentence ilā an qām thālith al-qawm nāfiḡa hudnaih² in Nahj al-Balāgha perhaps borrows from al-Huṭa'ah (d.678 A.D.) in his satire which has been regarded as the worst of its kind, and in which he ridicules the over-fondness of eating.³

II. The Jāhilī Prose

On the other side of the linguistic art of the Jāhiliyah, the prose, stood the khatīb and the kāhin. Perhaps it is due to the part played by memory that the Jāhilī prose that has come down to us is insignificant compared with the Jāhilī poetry. Zakī Mubārak reports a conversation between Khalīl Muṭrān and Muḥammad Haikal in the University of Cairo in 1928, when Khalīl Muṭrān pointed

1. Nahj al-Balāgha, Address Nos. 3, 24, 34, etc.

2. Ibid., vol. 1, Address No. 3, p. 30.

3. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, The Commentary, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1959), p. 197.

out that the total work in the field of prose belonging to the Jāhilīyah period did not exceed the volume of a booklet, and yet, despite its insignificance, it proved sufficient to produce literary figures like 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. "This," says Zakī Mubārak, "is a mistake. For the literary qualities which manifested themselves in the khuṭubāt [i.e. speeches] of the Arabs at the time of the Prophet were proofs of the many collections which must have existed at the time, of poetry, prose, speeches and proverbs."¹

However, Zakī Mubārak's claim is not substantiated with necessary evidence. Although al-Jāḥiẓ's remark can be quoted to endorse his statement. Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 256/869) says: "What the Jāhilī Arabs spoke in the way of eloquent prose was much more than what they wrote and spoke in the way of poetry. But not the tenth of that prose was preserved and not the tenth of the poetry was lost."² The same author lists a number of the speakers who were active in the Jāhilī period. Amongst the ancient speakers he cites Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy ~~Lu'ayy~~, who used to address the Jāhilīs generally and the tribe of Kinānah in particular. His influence over the ancient societies of the Jāhilī period was so profound that when he died the calendars of Kinānah were made to take the date of his death as the

1. Zakī Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī fī al-Qarn al-Rābi' (Cairo, 1934), p. 33.

2. Al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1928), p. 158.

starting point. And it remained so up until the time when Abraha came to Mecca with his army and elephants to invade Mecca and destroy the Temple; it was only then that the Year of the Elephant became the starting point of the Arabian calendars.¹ According to one report Ka'b was the first man to name Friday jum'ah, for prior to that the day was called 'arūbah, perhaps owing to the fact that on that day the people gathered round him to be addressed by him. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 395/1004) records one of his speeches, as follows:

Listen, and listen carefully; seek knowledge in order to be knowledgeable; ask in order to understand. The night is dark and the day is still while the earth [serving you as] the floor and the sky as the roof; all this is a test; for the late-comers as it has been for the forerunners. Treat your relations with kindness and generosity. Protect your relations through marriage. And put your wealth to fruitful uses. Purify your deeds. For have you seen a dead person ever returning? Or a dead body every resurrected? The abode is in front of you and the probable happening is the opposite of what you say! Adorn your Temple [the

1. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, al-Awā'il, vol. 1 (Damascus, 1975), pp. 47-48.

Ka'bah] and revere it; and hold fast to it; never forsaking it. For a great news there is for it in store; [as] a noble prophet is going to rise from it.¹

Amongst other public speakers of the period of the Jāhiliyyah, Akhtham ibn Saifī, Ḥājib ibn Zurārah, al-Ḥarth ibn 'Ubād al-Bakrī, 'Amr ibn Sharīd, Khālīd ibn Ja'far al-Kilābī, 'Alqamah ibn 'Alāqah al-'Āmirī, Qais ibn Mas'ūd al-Shaibānī, 'Āmir ibn Ṭufail al-'Āmirī, 'Amr ibn Ma'dīkarīb, have been noted. But prominent amongst the khuṭabā' of the Jāhili period and most renowned of them all, was Quss ibn Sā'ida al-Iyādī, who became a proverbial khaṭīb in the spheres of al-balāgha and good preaching. Apart from his words, his manners were also noted as the Muslim historians point out that he was the first to

1. Ibid., p. 84. The text reads:

اسْمَعُوا وَعَلِّمُوا وَتَعَلَّمُوا وَتَفَهَّمُوا تَفَهَّمُوا. لَيْلٌ
 دَاجٌ وَنَهَارٌ سَاجٌ وَالْأَرْضُ مِهَادٌ وَالسَّمَاءُ بِنَاءٌ وَالْجِبَالُ
 أَوْتَادٌ وَالْأَوَّلُونَ كَأَ الْآخِرِينَ كُلُّ ذَاكَ إِلَيَّ بَلِي. فَظَلُّوا
 أَرْحَامَكُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا أَصْهَارَكُمْ وَثَمَرُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَصْلَحُوا
 أَعْمَالَكُمْ. فَهَلْ رَأَيْتُمْ مِنْ هَٰذَا رَجَعٌ، أَوْ مَيِّتٌ نُشِرَ
 الدَّارَ أَمَامَكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ خَلْفَ مَا تَقُولُونَ. زِينُوا حَرَمَكُمْ
 وَعَظِّمُوا وَتَمَسَّكُوا بِهِ وَلَا تُفَارِقُوهُ فُسَبَّاتِي لَهُ نَبَاءٌ
 عَظِيمٌ سَيُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ نَبِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ.

preach while leaning on a walking stick.¹ He may have been a Christian and, according to some, a Unitarian.² The impact of his words, style, and the message was so great as to engage the attention of all the literary writings of Muslim scholars, like al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, Abū 'Alī al-Qālī, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih and others. Analysing the rational causes and the earliest influences which may have helped Muḥammad in conceiving the idea of prophethood and, eventually, the formulation of the Qur'ān, some of the Orientalists mention Waraqa ibn Nawfal al-Asadī, who was a leading member of the group known as al-Ḥunafā' in the Jāhilī period. Others have cited Baḥīrah, the Christian monk whom Muḥammad had visited with his uncle Abū Ṭālib on his way to Syria. The Muslims, however, point out that neither of the two have been noted either as al-khatīb, i.e. the public preacher or speaker, or as the writer of a prose work such as the Qur'ān is. In the case of Qus, however, we have a clear indication of a lasting impression on Muḥammad. We have already noted earlier in the first chapter how al-Jāḥiẓ, quoting a speech of Qus through Muḥammad, had said that no better isnād (for Qus' speeches) could be asked for. On the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih records the following story:

1. al-Jāḥiẓ, op. cit., p. 151.

2. Ferdinand Total, Mu'jam al-A'lam (Beirut, 1956), p. 416.

A deputation came to the Messenger of God from the tribe of al-Iyād. He [Muḥammad] asked them: "Which of you know Qus ibn Sā'idah?" They replied: "We all know him." He asked: "What happened to him?" They answered that he had died. Thereupon Muḥammad said: "I shall never forget him as he appeared at the Market of 'Ukāz, riding a red camel and thus addressing the people:

"Listen and listen carefully; whosoever dies is lost and whatever there is to come will come. The news of what is to come is in the heavens. [But here on earth] there are lessons to be learned [in the] passing clouds and the sinking stars; and the revolving heavenly bodies. Qus swears by God that there is one religion which unto God is more pleasing than this one which you practice." [Then he ^{said} ~~said~~:] "Why do I see people go but not return? Were they pleased with the place and therefore stayed on or were they [for once] left alone so they went to sleep?"¹

1. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-'Iqd al-Farīd, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1928), p. 385.

The third component of the language-oriented society was al-kāhin. His functions ranged between the Brahman of India and the Kohen of the Jews. He foretold the future, interpreted dreams and gave judgements in the people's disputes. His vehicle of influence through which he manifested his skills was, like the poet and the public speaker, al-khatīb, short sentences carefully measured and prophetically pronounced. His rhymed endings that have been reported are somewhat similar to the early sūrahs of the Qur'ān; in the pattern of the sentence, the force of adjurations and the usage of rhymes are all common between the two. Al-balāghah has been defined as mā yaqtadī al-hāl, meaning that the speech is fasīh or eloquent if it conformed with the requirements of the occasions and the place. Thus it seems likely that the early revelations were made in the style people of the day had grown accustomed to, i.e. the language and the style of the kāhin. Ibn Ishāq's version of the two most prominent kāhins, Shaqīq and Saṭīḥ is given as follows:

Rabī'a b. Naṣr, king of the Yaman, was of the true stock of the Tubba' kings. He had a vision which terrified him and continued to cause him much anxiety. So he summoned every soothsayer, sorcerer, omenmonger and astrologer in his kingdom and said: "I have had a vision which terrifies me and is a source of anxiety. Tell me what it was and

what it means?" They replied: "Tell us the vision and we will tell you its meaning."

"If I tell you it," said he, "I can have no confidence in your interpretation; for the only man who knows its meaning is he who knows about the vision without my telling him." Thereupon one of them recommended him to send for Shaqīq and Saṭīḥ, for they knew more than others and would be able to answer his questions. Saṭīḥ's name was Rabī' b. Rabī' b. Mas'ūd b. Māzin b. Dhi'b b. 'Ady b. Māzin Ghassān. Shaqīq was the son of Sa'ab b. Yashkur b. Ruhm b. Afrak b. Qasr b. Abqar b. Anmar b. Nizār, and Anmar was the father of Bajīla and Khath'am. So he sent for them and Saṭīḥ arrived first. The king then repeated his words, ending, "If you know the vision you will know what it means." Saṭīḥ replied:

A fire you did see

Come forth from the sea.

It fell on the low country

And devoured all that be.¹

The text reads:

1.

حَمِيمَةٌ خَرَجَتْ مِنْ ظِلْمِهِ فَوَقَعَتْ بِأَرْضِ نَحْمِهِ فَأَكَلَتْ مِنْهَا
كُلَّ ذَاتٍ جَمِيمَةٍ.

The king agreed that this was exactly what he had seen, and what was the meaning of it all? He answered:

By the serpent of the lava plains I swear
The Ethiopians on your land shall bear
Ruling from Abyan to Jurash everywhere.¹

The king exclaimed that this was distressing news, but when would these things come to pass -- in his time or after him? Saṭiḥ replied that more than sixty or seventy years must first pass. "Would the new-comers' kingdom last?" "No, an end would be put to it after seventy years or more; then they would be slain or driven out as fugitives." "Who would do this?" "Iram b. Dhū Yazan, who would come against them from Aden and not leave one of them in the Yemen." Further questions drew the information that their kingdom would not last, but a pure prophet to whom revelation came from on high would bring it to an end; he would be a man of the sons of Ghalib b. Fihir b. Malik b. al-Nadr. His dominion

1. أَحْلِفُ بِمَا بَيْنَ الْحَرَّتَيْنِ مِنْ حَنْشٍ، لَتَهْبِطَنَّ أَرْضُكُمْ الْحَبَشَ
فَلْيَمْلِكَنَّ مَا بَيْنَ أَبْيَنَ إِلَى جُرَاشٍ

would last till the end of time. Has time
an end? asked the king. Yes, replied Satih,
the day on which the first and the last
shall be assembled, the righteous for
happiness, the evildoers for misery. Are
you telling me the truth? the king asked.

[Satih replied:]

Yes, by the dark and the twilight
and the dawn that follows the night

Verily what I have told you is right.¹
قال نعم، والشفق والنسق إذا اتسق إن ما أنباتك به لحق

The above extract from Ibn Ishāq is as it appears in the translation of A. Guillaume. I have provided the Arabic text for the parts of the kāhin's speech where Guillaume has translated it in verse. But the object of the exercise is to provide pattern of kāhin's speech which the part of the story quoted accomplishes. Al-Mas'ūdī has, in his Murūj al-Dhahab, several utterances of kāhins in the chapter he devotes to their stories.² And those utterances conform to the pattern quoted above.

It may be noted, in conclusion, that the characteristic of Jāhilī prose, whether in the speeches or in the sayings of the soothsayers, is its stress on the rhyme and it conveys the impression that the ideas were made to follow the available rhymes rather than the opposite. Generally

1. Ibn Ishāq, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

2. al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1948), pp. 180-84.

there seems to be the lack of natural flow in the constructions. Many of the Jāhilī quotations end up in prophesying the arrival of the Arabian prophet as we have noted in the speech of Ka'b ibn Lu'ī (from amongst the khaṭībs) and the above dialogue between Saṭīḥ and the king. All of which brings into question the authenticity of it. However, there can be no doubt as to the pattern the Jāhilī khaṭīb and kāhin must have spoken in. Nor can there be doubt about the tremendous influence they exercised over the Jāhilī societies. The quotation of kāhins prophesying the arrival of the Prophet, if attributed to him falsely, do nevertheless, speak of his importance even to the Islamic societies. And the example of Qus ibn Sā'idah al-Iyādī is another testimony where the Jāhilī influence and the voice still echoed when much else had died away.

Following are some of the examples where al-Saj' (i.e. rhyme), the other feature of the Jāhilī prose, seems to be the pattern in Nahj al-Balāgha: (1) Address No. 1, note the short and rhymed sentences which conform well with the Jāhilī style; (2) Address No. 81, in some of the sentences of which the ideas seem to be made to follow the rhyme, a characteristic feature of the speeches of al-Kāhin as noted above; (3) Address No. 88, where the language of al-Kāhin is most audible; (4) Address No. 101, where there are striking similarities with the speech of Qus ibn Sā'idah quoted above; (5) Address No. 153, which is in the description of al-Khuffāsh (i.e. the

bat) and which seems to be sustained purely by rhymes, for there is little information about the creature itself.

In fact it would not be wrong to state that in Nahj al-Balāgha the speeches of which the dominant feature is rhyme are more frequent than those which do not seem to deliberately follow the rhyme.

B. The Qur'ān

With the Qur'ān, the processes of emulation become more apparent in Nahj al-Balāgha. There are examples where the words have been borrowed and there are examples where both the words and the ideas have been borrowed and these are in addition to the direct quotations from the Qur'ān which freely occur in Nahj al-Balāgha. The examples of all these groups are as follows:

1. In the first Address the sentence wala yuhsī na'mā'hū al-'āddūn (i.e. His blessings cannot be counted by the reckoners) seems to be a direct borrowing from Sūrah XIV:34 and Sūrah XVI:18, where the sentence wa in ta'uddū ni'mat Allāh lā tuḥsūhā appears, indicating that both the words and the idea has been borrowed in Nahj al-Balāgha. Similarly the word faṭara which occurs in faṭara al-khalāi'iq bi qudratih is used in the same context in the Qur'ān in Sūrahs VI:79 and XI:51. The sentence wa nashar al-riyāh bi rahmatih occurs in the Qur'ān (Sūrah XXVI:24) where the idea of spreading the winds is associated with God's mercy and is expressed in

the same words. Again the idea of mountains being the stabilisers of earth which is expressed in the same address has the Qur'ānic precedent in Sūrah LXXVIII:7. At the time of the creation God "decorated" the skies with stars. This is expressed in Nahj al-Balāgha in the sentence: thumma zayyanahā bi zīnat al-kawākib and has the Qur'ānic parallel in Sūrah XXXVII:6. Again, the idea of "cleaving the space" at the time of creation is expressed as: thumma ansha'ā subhānahū fatq al-ajwā', which occurs in the Qur'ānic Sūrah XXI:30. The story of the creation of Adam, is told in the words of the Qur'ānic Sūrahs XXXVIII:21-22, XXXVII:11, II:264, XV:26, and VII:11.

2. In Address No. 23, wealth and children have been described as the harvest of this world and the good deeds as the harvest of the next world: inna al-māl wa al-banīn harth al-dunyā wa al-'amal al-sālih harth al-ākīrah, which, both the idea and the words, appear in the Qur'ānic Sūrahs II:40 and XLII:20 and are seemingly the source.

3. In Address No. 27, al-Jihād has been described as the raim^ent of piety, libās al-taqwā, which apparently has been borrowed from the Qur'ān, Sūrah VII:26.

4. The beginning of Address No. 48 has the eloquence of the Meccan Sūrahs and compares with Sūrah CXIV:30.

5. In Address No. 85, the Ahl al-Bait, the people of Muḥammad's household, have been described as alsinat al-sidq (i.e. the tongues of truth); this metaphor appears in the Qur'ān, Sūrah XXVI:84, although in singular form, i.e. lisān sidq.
6. In Sūrah No. LXXXIV, heaven has been described as the heaven of the constellations, dhāt al-burūj; the expression is borrowed by Nahj al-Balāgha in Address No. 88.
7. Address No. 95 opens with the sentences: If God has granted a respite to the oppressor and the transgressor, [He has done so] for he will never be able to escape Him; God, who is watchful over the passages the tyrant is likely to pass by, and [being near to him as] the passage of his saliva.¹ These ideas of God's nearness, His watchfulness, the inevitability of one's falling back to His judgement and Command are also expressed in the Qur'ān, Sūrahs LVII:4, LXXXIX:14 and L:16.
8. A Prophet is sent to call people towards truth (al-Haqq) and to be a witness (al-Shahīd), over His creation. This constitutes the theme of Address No. 112 and has parallel in the Qur'ān, Sūrahs II:143 and IV:40.

1.

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ.

9. 'Alī was censured over treating people as equals in distributing the state allowances. His reaction is Address No. 124, which begins: atāmurūnnī an atlub al-nasr bi al-jawr fī man wullīt 'alaih?, which speaks in the language and the style of a fa ghair Allāh tā'mrūnnī a'bud ayyuhā al-Jāhilūn?, verse 64 of Sūrah XXXIX.

10. In Address No. 131 and alluding to God, the following is said:

He under whose Command stand This and the
Next World; to Whom heaven and earth have
surrendered their keys; and to Whom the
green trees prostrate day and night in
worship; and with the Will of whom the
green boughs and branches yield a luminous
fire; [Or] with the Blessings of Whom the
[green trees] bring forth fruits that are
ripened.

Both the style and the contents of this part of the address have parallels in the Qur'ān which, in Sūrah XXII:18, says:

Hast thou not seen that unto Allāh
payeth adoration whosoever is in the
heavens and whosoever is in the earth,
and the sun, and the moon, and the stars,
and the hills, and the trees, and the
beasts and many of mankind, while there
are many unto whom the doom is justly due.

And the idea of a green tree yielding the luminous fire is also spoken of in Sūrah XXXVI:80: "[He] Who hath appointed for you fire from the green tree, and behold! Ye kindle from it!"

These examples are sufficient to show the profound influence of the Qur'ān over the style and the ideas of the speaker in Nahj al-Balāgha. But by the same token, the conformity with the Qur'ān of some parts and the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha brings into question the ideas and the constructions which are not known to the Qur'ān and yet are still a part of the book and thus attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. One notices that concepts like al-Īmān (i.e. Belief), al-Ṣabr (i.e. Patience), al-Yaqīn (i.e. Faith or Conviction), al-'Adl (i.e. Justice), al-Jihād (i.e. Holy War), are used in the Qur'ān in their simple and basic forms. Let us take the first word, al-Īmān, which occurs in many Sūrahs of the Qur'ān.¹ Now in all the usages the word has been used to mean "belief" and "faith". But no further refinement of the term has been attempted. Nor the possible sub-divisions of the concept are either mentioned or alluded to. In Nahj al-Balāgha, however, the very word al-Īmān meets with a logical, sophisticated and analytical treatment.

1. Sūrahs II:108; III:166, 173, 177, 193; V:6; VIII:2; IX:24, 125; XVI:106; XXX:56; XXXIII:22; XL:10; XLII:52; XLIX:7, 11, 14, 17; LI:21; LVIII:22; XLVIII:4; LIX:9, 10; LXXIV:31.

"Al-Īmān," it says, "stands on four pillars, viz, al-Sabr [forbearance], al-Yaqīn [the certainty of Faith], al-'Adl [Justice], and al-Jihād [the Holy War]." Then al-Sabr [the first pillar of al-Īmān] in turn, is said to be of four variations: al-Shawq [longing], al-Shafaq [fear], al-Zuhd [asceticism] and al-Taraqquq [expectation].

And so whosoever longed for heaven, refrained from the worldly desires; and whosoever feared Fire [of Hell] abstained from doing the forbidden; and whosoever practiced ascetisism, calamities came easier to him; and whosoever anticipated his death, raced to perform good deeds.¹

The speech goes on to describe the variations of al-Yaqīn (Faith, positively believed), al-'Adl (Justice) and al-Jihād (the Holy War). In the variations of the last mentioned, the term is extended to include al-Amr bi al-Mā'rūf (asking people to perform that which has been enjoined), al-Nahī 'an al-Munkar (preventing people from committing that which has been forbidden), al-Sidq fī al-Mawātin (being true to one's convictions and one's stand), and Shan'ān al-Fāsiqīn (repudiation of and enmity towards the Godless and the sinful). This analytical style with regard to these concepts is somewhat alien to

1. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 3 (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 157-58.

the style and the language of the Qur'ān, praiseworthy in itself though it may be. However, this seems to be a later theological development.

Moving away from the conceptual and turning to material and bodily forms, there is yet another descriptive and stylistic aspect in Nahj al-Balāgha which is not found in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān's central theme remains Man; yet a great attention is paid to environment: the sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the mountains, the earth and the ones which breathe and move on it. Creatures sharing the existence of man, the animals, have not been overlooked but the mention is either in the historical context, as in the story of Joseph (Sūrah XII), when Joseph's brothers wanted him to go with them and asked their father for his permission, he said: "It grieves me that you should take him with you, and I fear the wolf may eat him" (XII:13). Or on the occasion when the mighty army of Solomon is on the march: "An ant said, 'Ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you'" (XXVII:18). Or the animals are mentioned in the process of inviting man's attention to God through His creation, as: "Do you not see the camel, how was it created?" (LXXXVII:17). Or: "Lo! those on whom you call beside Allāh will never create a fly though they combine together for the purpose" (XXII:73). Or to stress that God remains the source of inspiration not only for man but even for small creatures such as a bee: "And thy Lord inspired the bee, saying: Choose thou habitations in the

hills and in the trees and in that which they hatch"
(XVI:68).

The point to note is that when creatures or animals are mentioned in the Qur'ān, their mention is brief and confined to illustrating a given point. There is no attempt in the Qur'ān to render a scientific or analytical account of any of the animals it mentions. Nahj al-Balāgha on the other hand, has the descriptive addresses on peacocks, bats, and ants.¹ In sharp contrast with the Qur'ān, the accounts are detailed and the language highly ornamented. Yet the actual information communicated on the bird, the nocturnal mammal, and the insect is far less than the space devoted to it would demand. It appears that the forced artificiality of the language of the accounts under discussion in Nahj al-Balāgha not only alienates them from the style of the Qur'ān but also from much of the book itself. In fact one is inclined to say that the casual references of the Qur'ān, to the beasts, the birds, and the insects, are more in harmony with the knowledge and the spirit of the time than those deliberate renderings in Nahj al-Balāgha and attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

1. Nahj al-Balāgha, description of bat: No. 153, vol. 2, p. 60; description of peacock, No. 163, vol. 2, p. 163; description of ant and locust: No. 183, vol. 2, p. 183.

CHAPTER V

THE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NAHJ AL-BALĀGHA

The language and the style of a book which has been regarded for the last thousand years as next only to the Qur'ān in its excellence of language and superiority of expression, and which has been extensively quoted by both Sunnites and Shī'ites up to the present time, must be examined in the context of this thesis. Despite the differing views concerning 'Alī, what are the common factors which made the Sunnī scholars like 'Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāhiz (d. 255 A.H.), Abū 'Alī al-Qālī (d. 356 A.H.), Qādī Nu'mān (d. 358 A.H.) and other medieval scholars quote 'Alī? Reverence for 'Alī's position in Islam is one possible answer. But the other which is more in conformity with the nature of the works of the authors cited above, is the language and the style. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 A.H.), while commenting on the verse about the angels in the chapter of al-baqarah, quotes from Nahj al-Balāgha and states: "Know that there is no description more sublime and more grandiloquent than this of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī bar the speeches [al-kalām] of God and His Prophet."¹

Chronologically speaking, Nahj al-Balāgha, or the material contained therein, is claimed to begin in the

1. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Mafātiḥ al-Ghaib (better known as Tafsīr al-Kabīr), vol. 2 (Cairo, 1307), p. 256.

year 11 of the Islamic era, i.e. immediately after the death of Muḥammad (see No. 230, vol. 2; No. 64, vol. 1, etc.) and end in the year 40 A.H., i.e. the year 'Alī was assassinated (see No. 145, vol. 2; No. 23, vol. 3, etc.). If genuine, it is the nearest literature in terms of time, to the Qur'ān and the only substantial surviving material which is said to have been produced in the first half of the first Islamic century.

It should be remembered that 'Alī was adopted by Muḥammad when only six years of age, and he remained with him in the Meccan and Medinan periods. All that, in addition to his being Muḥammad's first cousin and son-in-law, would have affected 'Alī's intellectual upbringing and it is most probable that he emulated Muḥammad after the latter's death and before his own Caliphate, by restraining his sword while engaging in oratory. The association of the two, the Prophet and 'Alī, was so close that it would make it difficult to find an occasion when a verse was "revealed" and when 'Alī was not present either in Mecca or in Medina. The influence of the Qur'ān therefore upon him is another factor to be borne in mind when analysing his style.

The Usage of al-Saj'

Al-saj' is a type of prose composition which is characterised by short rhyming phrases. Although little of that has survived and although that which has survived may not be genuine, the certainty of the usage of al-saj'

at an early period is guaranteed by the very fact that efforts were made to forge it. One observes that the parts of the Qur'ān nearer in terms of time to the Jāhilī period contain more short rhyming phrases. Like the Qur'ān, 'Alī was a product of the Jāhilī period, too. One therefore would expect to find al-saj' in his pronouncements emulating either the Qur'ān or the Jāhilīs or both. In Nahj al-Balāgha one does find that the usage of al-saj' has been relied upon extensively. Not, perhaps, so effectively as in the Qur'ān, but in the same pattern nevertheless, and seemingly to achieve the same objectives, viz., conformity with the existing literature, in this case more to the Qur'ān perhaps. This would take due regard to the shortcomings of those who were illiterate and would attempt to create the desired impact on the minds of the listeners. We take, for example, No. 12 (vol. 1, p. 40), where the victorious commander addresses the rebellious army now defeated. Note how the rhyme is made to create the profoundest of impact; "kuntum jund al-marā'; wa-atbā' al-bahīma; raghā fa-ajabtum wa-'uqira fa-harabtum".¹ "You were the army of a woman; and the followers of the beast of burden; it howled and you responded; it was slaughtered and you ran away!" The suggestions of fighting under unwise leadership, of not knowing the cause, of not being able to

1. The text reads:

كُنْتُمْ جُنْدَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَاتَّبَعَ الْبَهِيمَةَ رَغِي
فَاجَبْتُمْ وَعَقِرْتُمْ

sustain the effort, are crammed in the rhymes. In another place (No. 20, vol. 1, p. 54), the usage of assonances and rhymes has combined with effect: "fa-inna al-ghāyāt amāmakum; wa inna al-sā'ata taḥdūkum; takhaffafū talhaqū fa-innamā yuntazar bi-awwalikum āakhirakum."¹ "Lo, your destination is in front of you, behind is time urging you along, lighten your burdens and catch up. For with the arrival of your first one [the arrival of] your last one is awaited." The idea of death and destiny being in front of man to which he is being pushed by time and the suggestion of lightening one's burden in the form of worldly possessions and racing towards the better world (instead of meandering along) is conveyed so effectively that the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, intervenes to say: "If it were to be weighed, barring the speeches of God and His Prophet, with any other piece of prose, the scale would tilt in its favour...."² In No. 26 (vol. 1, p. 63), the holy war, al-jihād, has been praised and the metaphorical usages of the rhymes is noteworthy:

وَهُوَ لِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى وَدِرْعُ اللَّهِ
الْحَصِينَةُ وَجُنَّةُ الْوَيْفَةِ .

It is the attire of piety; and the God
-given shield that protects; and the armour
which is impenetrable.

1. فَإِنَّ الْحَايَةَ أَمَامَكُمْ وَإِنَّ وَرَاءَكُمْ السَّاعَةَ تَحْدُوكُمْ تَخَفُّوْا تَلْحَقُوا
فَمَا نَسْتَنْظِرُ بِأَوَّلِكُمْ آخِرَكُمْ .

2. Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 1, p. 54.

This is imagery which must have been equally appreciated by the soldiers in 'Alī's army and the ascetics in the mosque.

Writing on the features of Qur'ānic style, Montgomery Watt remarks:

Occasionally a phrase is added at the end of a verse which is really otiose as regards sense but supplies the assonance, as in 12.10 and 21.68, 79, 104. Sometimes the sense is strained in order to produce the rhyme, for instance in Sura 4, where statements regarding God are thrown into the past by the use of kāna, "was", in front of them, and are thereby given the accusative ending on which the rhyme depends. The form of a proper name is occasionally modified for the sake of rhyme, as sinīn (95.2) and ilyasīn (37, 130).¹

Over-indulging the rhymes is, of course, a Jāhilī attitude, of the old literary pattern, which neither the Qur'ān nor Nahj al-Balāgha is free from. In Nahj al-Balāgha, the following is one occasion on which the rhyme seems to serve no other purpose than to conform to the one which follows in the next sentence:

1. W. Montgomery Watt, Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 71.

أَرْضُكُمْ قَرِيبَةٌ مِّنَ الْمَاءِ بَعِيدَةٌ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ

Your land is near water and far from
heavens.¹

This 'Alī has been quoted as having said while addressing the people of al-Baṣra. Now if the latter sentence is interpreted as "far from heaven" meaning "far from God's Mercy" (at that particular juncture and in that act of rebellion), the former, "ardukum qarībat min al-mā'", still remains inexplicable. What was wrong, one would be inclined to wonder, in being near water in a land where the sun was hostile and water a valuable commodity? We are, therefore, forced to assume that it was al-Samā', for which the rhyme al-Mā' has been brought in. The other example appears as follows:

فَقُمْتُ بِالْأَمْرِ حِينَ فَشَلُّوا وَتَطَلَمْتُ حِينَ تَقَبَعُوا وَنَطَقْتُ حِينَ
تَعْتَمُوا وَمَضَيْتُ بِنُورِ اللَّهِ حِينَ وَقَفُوا وَكُنْتُ أَخْفَضَهُمْ صَوْتًا
وَأَعْلَاهُمْ قَوْتًا فَطَرْتُ بِعَيْنَانِيهَا وَاسْتَبَدْتُ بِرَهَانِيهَا كَمَا الْجَبَلُ
لَا تَجْرِكُهُ الْقَوَاصِفُ وَلَا تُزِيلُهُ الْعَوَاصِفُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِأَحَدٍ فِيَّ مَقَمَزُ
وَالْقَائِلُ فِيَّ مَقَمَزُ الدَّلِيلُ عِنْدِي عَزِيزٌ حَتَّى آخِذُ الْحَقِّ لَهُ
وَالْقَوِيُّ عِنْدِي ضَعِيفٌ حَتَّى آخِذُ الْحَقِّ مِنْهُ رُضِينَا بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ
وَسَلَمْنَا لِلَّهِ أَمْرَهُ أَتُرَانِي أَكْذِبُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَالِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَأَنَا أَوْلَى مِنْ صَدَقَهُ فَلَا أَكُونُ أَوْلَى مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيْهِ
فَنَظَرْتُ فِي أَمْرِي فَإِذَا طَاعَتِي قَدْ سَبَقَتْ بَيْعَتِي وَإِذَا الْمِيشَاقُ
فِي عُنُقِي لِغَيْرِي

1. No. 13, vol. 1, p. 41.

I stood for the task when they had deserted the field and placed myself forward when they had withdrawn to their shells; I spoke when they deprived [the community] of their speech; [Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd corrects the text at this point and writes ta'ta'ū, in which case it would mean: I spoke when they were lost for words.]; I went forward with the help of divine light when they had stopped; of their voices the lowest was mine and yet most original; so I flew with the reins and was left on my own in the race; like the mountains which are unmoved by the ravages of the hurricanes and are not uprooted by the toils of the tempests; no one was able to find a fault with me; nor a speaker to speak ill of me; important with me is the down-trodden till I secure his rights for him while the strong is weak with me till I get what is due from him. We are satisfied with God's Will and have entrusted to Him our affairs. Do you assume I would lie about the Prophet? I swear by God that I was the first to testify his mission and I will not be the first to lie about him. I considered my position and found that my pledge had preceded my

claim and hanging over my head was a
covenant for someone else.¹

Guided by the rhymes we have a contradictory text. It began with fashalū, taqabba'ū, tammana'ū, and waqafū, contrasted with qumtu, tatalla'tu, naṭaqtu and maḍaitu. Together, the rhymes draw the picture of a courageous man. Then comes akhfadukum sawta which nullifies the effects of the aforesaid rhymes, for it suggests a prudent man, if not one devoid of grit and guts! Because we have to assume akhfadukum sawta as a merit acquired by choice and something which one is forced into. For in the latter case it would cease to be a virtue worth boasting about. That being so, we are forced to assume that akhfadukum sawta was brought in to rhyme with a'lākum fawta and for no other purpose. Then the stated resolution vis-a-vis the weak and the strong is followed by the statement of resignation to the Will of God. Here again the premise has been weakened as in the first example. Then the passage which began with the announcement of courage ends with rhymes which again portray a man who is a victim of indecision and swept away by the force of events.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd does not fail to notice this and he remarks:

These in fact are from four separate speeches and therefore do not mix together. And with each of these Amīr al-Mu'minīn seemed to have

1. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 36, vol. 1, p. 36.

followed a different direction. But al-Raḍī has picked them up from the long and scattered speeches of 'Alī...¹

I would, however, point out that when al-Raḍī has extracted a passage from a long sermon or picks up a piece he thinks to be a part of a particular sermon or speech he usually indicates it with the words minhā or minhu. However, in the passage quoted above there is no such indication given by him.²

Usage of Metaphor

Ibn Rashīq (390-456 A.H.) wrote:

The Arabs very often make use of al-majāz and regard it as a praiseworthy feature in their speeches. For it [al-majāz] is a sure sign of al-faṣāḥa [i.e. being free from the undesirable pitfalls of the language] and the summit of eloquence [al-balāghah]. And it is though [the use of] al-majāz that the language [Arabic] has surpassed the others.³

To the literary critics, this al-majāz had a large family, viz., al-tashbīh (i.e. comparisons and allegories),

-
1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1959), p. 284.
 2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 84.
 3. Ibn Rashīq, al-'Umdah (Cairo, 1955), p. 265.

al-tamthīl (i.e. analogies), al-isti'āra (literally, borrowing of an expression), al-kināya (allusions or more precisely, metonymical expression). Now although I have translated the varieties of al-majāz, the subtlety of the differences makes these translations only approximate. Even read and understood in Arabic, it is not always easy to distinguish say, between al-talmīh and al-kināya. Indeed both the terms al-majāz and al-isti'āra have been translated as "metaphor". It is possible to describe all these varieties of al-majāz as "speaking metaphorically or figuratively."

The manifestation of al-majāz is found throughout the known Jāhilī and post-Jāhilī periods. They used metaphor not only as the recognized vehicle for figures of speech but also for compressed allusions and allegories. This is illustrated by the following lines composed by the Jāhilī prince-poet, Imru' ul-Qais:

سَمَوْتُ إِلَيْهَا بَعْدَ مَا نَامَ أَهْلُهَا
 سَمَوْتُ حَبَابِ الْمَاءِ جَالًا إِلَى حَالِ
 فَقَالَتْ يَمِينُ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ فَنَاءُ ضَحِي
 أَلَمْ تَرَى النَّاسَ وَالسَّمَارَ أَحْوَالِي
 فَقُلْتُ يَمِينُ اللَّهِ مَا أَنَا بِأَرْحُحُ
 وَلَوْ قَطَعُوا رَأْسِي لَدَيْكَ وَأَوْصَالِي

I rose to her, after her people had gone
 to sleep, rising like the water-bubble,
 now in one position, now in another!

She said: "By God you are going to disgrace me! Do you not see the people and the story-tellers around me?"

I said: "I swear by God, too, that I never let you go. Even if they cut my head and the limbs [but] if that act was done near you!"¹

The metaphors in question come in the first couplet. The compression of the following facts in samawtu and sumua habāb al-mā' hāla 'alā hāl is noteworthy: (1) that the girl is a bedouin; (2) that the habit of the roaming tribes was to choose an elevation or a hill to spend the night; (3) that the poet was afraid advancing at times and retreating in other times like the water-bubble tossed up and down by the waves, advancing and retreating; (4) that the poet was as helpless in his actions as the water-bubble.

Metaphor in the Qur'ān

Metaphor is found in the Qur'ān just as much as it was used by the Jāhilī poets. No Sūrah said to have been revealed in Medina is devoid of metaphor. And those of the Meccan Sūrahs which do not contain a metaphor can be counted on one's fingers. An example can be taken from Sūrah XIX, called "Mary", which begins:

1. Imru' ul-Qais, Dīwān (Beirut, 1970), p. 232.

ذَكَرُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَّرِيَّا . إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ يَدَاؤُا خَفِيًّا .
 قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ مِنِّي شَيْبًا .
 وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا .

This is a mention of your Lord's mercy
 unto His servant Zachariah. When he called
 upon his Sustainer and enunciated his
 prayer in whisper. He said: "O Lord, the
 bones within me have grown feeble and my
 head is aflame through [the mischief of]
 the old age. And in calling you, my Lord,
 I have never been a loser!"¹

Here the metaphor, wa-ishta'ala, is the case in point,
 which, as far as the evidence of the Jāhili literature
 indicates, is used for the first time in this context.
 And what a difference it has made!

In the story of Noah which is told in Sūrah XI,
 there are further examples where the metaphors are used
 with equal dramatic effects. At the point when the waters
 begin to rise and he is asked to embark on the ark with
 his followers, the course of the ship is thus described:

قَالَ: اِرْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِيُّهَا وَ مُرْسِيهَا ،

And he said: "Embark on it, the name of God
 be its course and its mooring!"²

1. Qur'ān (Karachi, n.d.), Sūrah XIX:2-4, p. 456.

2. Ibid., Sūrah XI:41, p. 337.

Usage of Metaphor in Nahj al-Balāgha

As has already been pointed out, 'Alī was well known for his style and use of language. The early traditions suggest that the literary skill came naturally to him. Traditions like the one narrated by al-Kalbī (Muḥammad b. Sā'ib, d. 146 A.H.) from a member of the al-Anṣār community: "While I was standing in one of the first rows on the Day of al-Jamal when 'Alī came and I turned back to look at him. He asked me: ابن مَثْرَى الْقَوْمِ and I replied there, pointing towards 'Ā'isha." Now al-Kalbī explains that by the word al-mathrā he meant the bulk and the majority of the enemy.¹ If anything, this is a strong indication of the taste of the man who would use a metaphor even in the crisis of a battle. However, as metaphor abounds in Nahj al-Balāgha I have chosen only a few examples which I propose to render under classified subjects:

God

(No. 1, p. 7):

الَّذِي لَا يَدْرُكُهُ بَعْدُ الْجَمَمُ وَلَا يَنَالُهُ غَوْصُ الْفِطَنِ
cannot be reached by flights of ambition
or deep diving of intelligence...

(No. 2, p. 22):

فَإِنَّهُ أَرْحَجُ مَا وُزِنَ وَأَفْضَلُ مَا خُرِنَ

weighs more than all the things weighable.

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 258.

More precious than all the things
treasureworthy.

(No. 8, p. 94):

فَلَا إِسْتِعْلَاؤُهُ بِأَعْدَاهُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ وَلَا اقْرُبُهُ سَأْوَاهُمْ
فِي الْمَكَانِ بِهِ ،

His heights have not distanced Him from
the things He has created. Nor His
nearness to them has made Him their equal.

People of Mecca

(No. 2, pp. 24-25):

نَوْمُهُمْ سُودٌ كَعَلَمٍ دُمُوعُ بَارِضٍ عَالِيهَا مُلْجَمٌ وَ جَاهِلُهَا
مُكْرَمٌ .

Their slumber is sleeplessness; and the
make-up [al-kuhl] of their eyes, their
tears. [They are] of a land in which
the learned is bridled and the ignorant
honoured.

Mu'āwiyah and his people

(No. 2, p. 24):

زَرَعُوا الْفُجُورَ وَ سَقَوْهُ الْغُرُورَ وَ حَصَدُوا الشُّبُورَ .

They have sown corruption and watered it
with deception and the crop therefore, is
bound to be, in the form of, waste [and
regrets].

At the mention of the people of al-Shūrā

(No. 3, p. 30):

أَسْفَتُ إِذَا أَسْفَوْا وَ طَرْتُ إِذَا طَارُوا .

I landed when they landed and flew when
they flew.

Waves of temptations and trials

(No. 4, p. 35):

أَبْهَا النَّاسُ شَقُوا أَمْوَاجَ الْفِتَنِ بِسُفُنِ النِّجَاةِ .

Cleave the waves of temptation and trials
with the boats of salvation.

Loyalty

(No. 40, p. 88):

إِنَّ الْوَفَاءَ تَوَامُ الصِّدْقِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ جُنَّةً أَوْقَى مِنْهُ .

Loyalty is a twin child to truthfulness.

I do not know of any other shield more
protecting [the sovereign and the subject].

Sins

(No. 15, p. 44):

إِنَّ الْخَلَايَا خَيْلٌ شُمُوحٌ حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا وَ خُلِيتْ
لَجَبُهَا فَتَقَحَّتْ بِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ .

Sins are the uncontrollable mounts whose
riders have been loaded upon them and

their reins were let loose. So they
crashed with their riders into the fire.

To his son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya

(No. 10, p. 39):

تَزُولُ الْجِبَالُ وَلَا تَزُلُ عَضَّ عَلَيَّ نَاجِذَكَ أَعْرَ اللَّهُ
جُمُجْمَتَكَ تَدُ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَدَمَكَ أَرْمَ بِبَصْرِكَ أَقْصَى
الْفُومِ وَ غَضَّ بِصْرِكَ وَأَعْلَمَ إِنَّ النِّصْرَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
سُبْحَانَهُ .

Mountains may move but you should not;
clamp [the two sets of] your teeth
together; loan to God your head and
plant in earth your feet; set your eyes
at the back row [of the enemy's line] and
close your eyes. And know that the victory
is in God's hands only.

The World (as opposed to the next one)

(No. 79, pp. 187-88):

مَا أَصِفُ مِنْ دَارٍ أَوَّلَهَا عَنَاءٌ وَ آخِرُهَا فَنَاءٌ
فِي خَلَالِهَا حِسَابٌ وَ فِي حَرَامِهَا عِقَابٌ مَنْ اسْتَغْنَى
فِيهَا فُتِنَ وَمَنْ رَافَقَهَا فِيهَا حُزِنَ وَ مَنْ سَاعَاهَا
فَانَنَّهُ وَمَنْ قَعَدَ عَنْهَا وَآتَنَهُ وَ مَنْ أَبْصَرَ إِلَيْهَا
أَعْمَنَهُ .

How do I define the house the beginning
of which is hardship and the end of which
is nothingness? In it, the permitted

earnings are accountable and the unlawful gains, subject to punishment! In which the prosperous becomes the object of set traps and the needy, the haunt of permanent sadness! Whoever runs after it, it eludes him. Whoever tries to look through it, it assists him to see clearly and yet, whoever tries to look to it, it blinds him!

Similes and Allegories

These two technical terms of al-Bayān are in fact one and the same. The evidence comes from H. W. Fowler, who points out:

It may fairly be said that parable is extended metaphor and allegory extended simile. To which may be added the following contrast. Having read a tale, and concluded that under its surface meaning another is discernible as the true intent, we say: This is an allegory. Having a lesson to teach, and finding direct exposition ineffective, we say let us try a parable.¹

1. H. W. Fowler, Modern English Usage (Oxford, 1968), p. 559.

And on the point of definitions, I would point out that the Arabic terms al-majāz and al-isti'āra both have been translated in English as metaphor although, technically, every isti'āra is al-majāz but every expression of al-majāz is not isti'āra.

But al-tashbīh (simile) is an isti'āra or metaphorical expression with qualifications. Like al-isti'āra it is a "borrowed expression" with the purpose of defining the object wholly or partly by means of comparisons. Thus

زيد اسد is an isti'āra and زيد كالاسد is a tashbīh (simile). Although in translation both the expressions will appear the same, the distinguishing features of al-tashbīh are comparisons in meaning and " ك " in letter. In rare cases when the latter is omitted the former still marks the difference.

Similes are used in Nahj al-Balāgha but very sparingly. Not like the Qur'ān, which is fertile in similes. And that marks yet another difference between the stylistic nature of the two. Examples of similes used in Nahj al-Balāgha are:

No. 1, p. 21 (describing the holy pilgrimage to al-Ka'bah):
People flock to it like cattle [to waters] and descend to it like eager pigeons [to their nests].

بَرْدُونَهُ وَرُودَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَبِأَلْيَهُنَّ إِلَيْهِ وَلَوْهَ الْحِمَامِ .

No. 3, p. 28 (describing the Caliphate): "The holder of its office is like the rider of an unruly camel; if the rider pulls back the reins, he injures the nose of it and yet, if he lets them go, the camel crashes with him [into the hazard]!"

فَصَاحِبُهَا كَرَاكِبِ الصَّعْبَةِ إِنْ أَشْنَقَ لَهَا خَرَمٌ وَإِنْ
أَسْلَسَ لَهَا تَقَحَّمْ.

No. 98, p. 196 (describing the civil disturbances):

"These turmoils are like the darkened parts of the night which cannot be assailed by the charges of cavalry or advances of the infantry."

فِتْنٌ كَقِطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ لَا تَقُومُ لَهَا قَائِمَةٌ.

No. 182, p. 150, vol. 2 (forecasting the forthcoming events of the future): "... and this will happen when you will be bitten by afflictions as the load bites the back of the camel [leaving lasting marks]."

وَذَإِلَيْكَ إِذَا عَضَّكُمْ الْبَلَاءُ كَمَا يَعْضُ الْقَتَبُ
غَارِبَ الْمَعِيرِ.

No. 263, p. 216, vol. 3: "The companion of a king is like the rider of a tiger! Envied by the onlookers but knowing himself only the true position!"

صَاحِبُ السُّلْطَانِ كَرَاكِبِ الْأَسَدِ يُغْبَطُ بِمَوَاقِعِهِ وَهُوَ
أَعْلَمُ بِمَوَاضِعِهِ .

No. 64, p. 164, vol. 3 (concerning the inhabitants of the earth): "They are like the carried travelers, asleep, while the caravan continues its journey."

أَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا كَرَكَبٍ يَسَارُ بِهِمْ وَهُمْ نِيَامٌ .

Parallelism in Nahj al-Balāgha

We have already noted the distinguishing features of al-tashbīh or simile. In the following example comparisons have been made and the letter kāf (ك) has also been used. Yet it is more of parallelism than of simile (al-tashbīh):

لَأَمَالٍ أَعُودُ مِنَ الْعَقْلِ، وَلَا وَحْدَةٍ أَوْحَشُ مِنَ الْعُجْبِ وَلَا
عَقْلٍ كَأَ التَّدْبِيرِ وَلَا كَرَمٍ كَأَ التَّقْوَى وَلَا قَرِينَ كَأَ الْحُسْنِ
الْخُلُقِ وَلَا مِثْرَاتٍ كَأَ الْأَدَبِ وَلَا فَائِدَ كَأَ التَّوْفِيقِ وَلَا
تِجَارَةَ كَأَ الْعَمَلِ لِلصَّالِحِ وَلَا رِبْحَ كَأَ الثَّوَابِ وَلَا وَرْعَ
كَالْوَقُوفِ عِنْدَ الشُّبْهِهِ وَلَا زُهْدَ كَأَ الزُّهْدِ فِي الْحَرَامِ وَلَا
عِلْمَ كَأَ التَّفَكُّرِ وَلَا عِبَادَةَ كَأَدَاءِ الْفَرَائِضِ وَلَا إِيْمَانَ
كَالْحَبَاءِ وَالصَّبْرِ وَلَا حَسَبَ كَأَ التَّوَاضُّعِ وَلَا شَرَفَ كَأَ الْعِلْمِ
وَلَا عِزَّةَ كَأَ الْحِلْمِ وَلَا مَظَاهِرَةَ أَوْشَقَ مِنَ الْمَشَاوِرَةِ .

There is no asset more beneficial than intelligence; there is no solitude more lonely than [that] of vanity; there is no foresight [more praiseworthy] than practical planning; there is no generosity [more giving] than fearing the Munificent; there is no companion [more pleasing] than good-naturedness; there is no inheritance [of more value] than being of good manners and intellect; there is no leader [more guiding] than self-motivation; there is no business [more profiting] than performing good deeds; there is no [investment] return [more lasting] than Divine rewards; there is no godliness [more self-vindicating] than stopping [at the deeds and the concepts] not clearly defined; there is no piety [more worthy of its name] than refraining from the forbidden; there is no knowledge [more profoundly acquired] than that which comes through thinking; there is no act of worship [more necessary] than that which has been enjoined; there is no Faith [al-Īmān] more symbolising it, than that which is manifested through self-esteem and patience; there is no act proving more a noble descent than the act of humility; there is no honour more elevating than [that of] knowledge;

there is no nobility more manifestly noble
 than [the acts of] tolerance; and there is
 no gathering of people more useful than
 that which is convened for mutual consultations.

The above passage has been quoted from No. 113, p. 177,
 vol. 3. Other examples can be located in No. 28, p. 156,
 vol. 3; No. 32, p. 159, vol. 3; No. 54, p. 164, vol. 3;
 No. 56, p. 164, vol. 3; No. 82, p. 168, vol. 3; No. 98,
 p. 172, vol. 3, among others.

Ellipsis

At first sight there appear to be no cases of ellipsis
 in Nahj al-Balāgha and this would seem to reflect the
 frequently cited tradition of 'Alī being the first
 compiler of Arabic grammar. However, there is some evidence
 to suggest that the text has been subject to occasional
 changes. This evidence comes from Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. It
 is as follows: in No. 16, p. 47, vol. 1, the collector
 has provided the heading as: "In the definition of the
 one who puts himself forward in order to solve people's
 problems (al-hukm bain al-umma) although he is not capable
 of it." The speech begins thus:

إِنَّ أَبْغَضَ الْخَلَائِقِ إِلَى اللَّهِ رَجُلَانِ : رَجُلٌ وَكَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى
 نَفْسِهِ فَهُوَ جَائِرٌ عَنْ قَصْدِ السَّبِيلِ مَشْغُوفٌ بِكَلَامٍ بِدْعَةٌ
 وَدُعَاءٌ ضَلَالَةٌ فَهُوَ فِتْنَةٌ لِمَنْ افْتَتَنَ بِهِ طَالَ عَنْ هُدًى
 مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَهُ مُضِلٌّ لِمَنْ اقْتَدَى بِهِ فِي حَيَاتِهِ وَبَعْدَ
 وَفَاتِهِ حَمَالٌ خَطَابًا غَيْرُهُ رَهْنٌ بِخَطِيئَتِهِ .

Verily, the most removed from God's mercy are men of two categories: [Of the first is] the man who has been left by Him to his own devices. So he continues to wander away from the right path, engaged in the innovative discourses, inviting people to error. He is a personification of deception for whomsoever is deceived by him. [Being himself] away from the guidance which was the way of his predecessors; leading astray those who follow him in his life, taking others' follies with him when he dies; and thus doubly pawned, [firstly] with his own sins, [secondly] with the others'.

I have quoted in full the description of the men in the first category to illustrate the pattern. The description of the second category of men is long but in it lies the evidence of changes. I quote only that part immediately connected with the sentence in question.

جَاهِلٌ خَبَاطٌ جَهَالَاتٍ عَائِشَ رُكَّابَ عَشَوَاتٍ لَمْ يَعْصِ عَلَيَّ
 الْعِلْمُ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ قَاطِعٍ يَذَرِي الرُّوَابِيَّاتِ إِذْ رَأَى الرِّيحَ الْهَشِيمَ
 لَا مَلِيٍّ وَاللَّهِ بِاصْدَارِ مَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا هُوَ أَهْلٌ لِّمَا هُوَ فَوْضُ
 إِلَيْهِ لَا يَحْسِبُ الْعِلْمُ فِي شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا أَنْكَرَ وَلَا يَرَى أَنَّ مِنْ
 وَرَاءَ مَا بَلَغَ مَذْهَبًا لِّغَيْرِهِ .

He is ignorant, the confused walker of the darkness; or a blind rider with no sense of direction; he **has never** had the "bite" of knowledge; he blows out the traditions as the wind does with the hay!

Neither he is competent to produce or issue from what he has [known] nor is he worthy of what has been assigned to him.

He does not think that there might be some aspects of knowledge in that which he does not know or denies. Nor does he appreciate that there might be some people who have travelled far beyond his reaches!.....

Commenting on the underlined sentence, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says that it is grammatically wrong if one begins a sentence with the word "lā" and omits to supplement it with the following sentence beginning with the "lā" also.

"It is wrong," says Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, "if you say lā zaidun qāimun unless you say wa lā 'Amrun."¹ However,

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd locates the required sentence in Ibn Qutaibah's book (Gharīb al-Ḥadīth) which, after the underlined sentence had:

وَلَا أَهْلٌ لِّمَا قَرَّطَ بِهِ .

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 285.

However, it shows that the sentence we find in the present version of Nahj al-Balāgha, i.e. wa-lā huwa ahl li-mā fuwwida ilaihi was not in it when Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd was writing his commentary between the years 644 and 649 A.H. And by his own admission, amongst many versions of the book, he had had one which was either written or authorised by the collector, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, himself.¹ Now once the practice of "grafting" is proved in one place, the existence of the same in another becomes more than a possibility.

Proverbs

The static nature of Arabic assists in fixing the introduction of proverbs into the language. Being unchanged and recorded faithfully, they point to the social tastes and customs and the linguistic usages of the earlier Islamic societies.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maidanī (d. 518 A.H.) in his Majma' al-Amthāl, however, has rendered a valuable service, for at the end of each chapter he has recorded proverbs which were at his time regarded as modern, separately. This enables us to use the ancient proverbs as the source for verification of the early linguistic usages apart from the Qur'ān and the Jāhilī poetry. It may not be possible to identify a given Arabic proverb with a particular class, but they do transmit information

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 12, p. 3.

about a person, a custom, a taste, the society and the mode of living. More often we are told of the person who originated the proverb and that, if taken to be true, reflects not only his approach and reactions but of his immediate circle and his contemporary society as well.

"Idhā hakakt qarḥat admaituhā" ("When I rub a wound, I make sure it bleeds") is the proverb attributed to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (d. 43 A.H.) which gives the impression of the vindictiveness of his nature but the fact that it became a proverb indicates also, that the sentiments were shared by most members of his society. This common agreement is again reflected in the proverbs which ascribe an attribute to a person, like fulān aḥfaz min al-'umyān and al-Sha'bī (So and so is better of memory than the blind and al-Sha'bī [d. 105 A.H.]). A few proverbs are constituted in a way that the time of their coming to existence can easily be ascertained, as adhal min umawī bi al-kūfa yawm 'āshūrā' (More despised than the Umayyad [a member of the Umayyad tribe] in al-Kūfa on the day of 'Āshūrā'). Now this proverb could have only been coined during the brief period when the Shī'ites, under the leadership of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Uбайд al-Thaqafī (d. 66 A.H.), had taken over the city. While yet another group of proverbs communicate the tastes of the early Islamic society: al-husn aḥmar (Beauty is red) tells us that the reddish complexions were favoured and that umm al-mu'minīn 'Ā'isha, who was named al-humairā', must have possessed good looks.

But what converts a saying into a proverb? And what were the qualities the Arabs were looking for in a proverb? Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. 221 A.H.), a distinguished Mu'tazilite and a teacher of al-Jāhiz, spells them out.

Four of the linguistic merits which unite in a proverb do not do so in any other branch of al-kalām [prose, speech, saying]:
 1. ījāz al-lafz, the compactness of the text; 2. isābat al-ma'nā, scoring the right meanings; 3. husn al-tashbīh, the simile-like excellence together with 4. jawdat al-kināya, metonymical delights.¹

Al-Nazzām omits what I have already pointed out to be one of the most essential attributes of a proverb, viz, general agreement of people with its import. There is no husn al-tashbīh or jawdat al-kināya in qimat kull imra'ī mā yuhsinuh (The price of a man is according to his expertise), a proverb of Nahj al-Balāgha but quoted by everyone who succeeded in leaving a mark on Arabic literature, people like Abū 'Ubaid, Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 210), Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224), Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350), al-Qālī (d. 356), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 327) and Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. ca. 395). In the following proverbs of Nahj al-Balāgha I have imposed the condition upon myself of arriving to them from outside sources as

1. al-Maidanī, Majma' al-Amthāl (Cairo, 1955), p. 6.

I have done in connection with the proverb just quoted.¹

There is no husn al-tashbīh and no hint of al-kināya in 'Alī's other saying which became a proverb: wa lākin lā raya li-man lā yuṭā' (...But there is no opinion for a man who is not obeyed!)² but it became a proverb for its ījāz al-lafz and iṣābat al-ma'nā, conforming with the approval and the agreement of the people. On another occasion when Ash'ath ibn al-Qais³ praised him and in so doing, perhaps, annoyed him, 'Alī said: anā dūna mā taqūl wa fawqa mā fī qalbik (I am below what you have said but above what you have hidden [of your opinion of me] in your heart.).⁴ The sentence is, perhaps, devoid of most of the artificial and intended decorative techniques as outlined by al-Nazzām but it became a proverb for people could identify the image in their own everyday life, dealing with similar people.

A group of people is described in the Qur'ān and then it is stated that they will never enter Paradise. And the never or the impossibility is further emphasised through borrowing from a Jāhilī proverb with the startling results:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتِّحُ لَهُمْ
أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يُلَاقِيَ الْحَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ
الْخَيْلِ.

1. al-Raghib al-Iṣfahānī, Muhadirat al-Udabā' (Beirut, 1941), p. 32.
2. al-Maidanī, op. cit., proverb No. 3662, p. 341.
3. Abū 'Ubaid al-Bakrī, Kitāb al-Amthāl (Khartoum, 1958), p. 28.
4. Ibid.

The gates of heaven shall not be opened
to them, nor shall they enter Paradise
until the camel passes through the eye of
the needle.¹

The technique of borrowing is also employed in Nahj al-Balāgha. In Sermon No. 155, for example, the proverb fa 'ind al-sabāh yahmad al-qawm al-surā (It is in the morning when people get to praise the travellers who left during the night!) is quoted to someone unappreciative of the lasting rewards of asceticism.² In Sermon No. 3, tilka shiqshiqat inḥadarat thumma qarrat is also a probable borrowing from the Jāhilī period. Amongst the proverbs actually attributed to 'Alī, some examples of which we have already noted, there are some which do not exist in Nahj al-Balāgha, as they are quoted in the sources outside it. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, for example, quotes a proverb adding:

I have been told by Abū Aḥmad who had
heard Abū al-Ḥasan al-Akhfash quote
al-Tha'lab as saying: "We do not know
if someone has narrated better in the
meaning than the following proverb from
'Alī: 'alaikum bi al-numruqat al-wustā
fa ilaihā yarja' al-ghālī wa bihā yalḥaq

1. Qur'ān, Sūrah V:39.

2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 156, vol. 2, p. 76.

al-tālī [Keep to the middle course because to it will return the exaggerater (in modern terms, the extremist) and at it will aim the straggler who has been left behind].¹

Now, this proverb does not exist in Nahj al-Balāgha in the form recorded by al-‘Askarī. However, the concept does appear twice. Firstly, in Sermon No. 16:

يُنْغِلَ مَنْ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ أَمَامَهُ . سَاعَ سَرِيعٍ نَجَاً وَ عَالِبِ
الْبَلَاءِ رَجَاً وَ مُقَصِّرٍ فِي النَّارِ هَوَى . الْبَيْمِئِ وَالشِّمَالِ
مُضِلَّةً وَ الطَّرِيقِ الْوَسْطِيِّ هِيَ الْجَادَّةُ .

"Preoccupied is the one who has heaven and hell in front of him! Amongst the competitors, there is the one who has arrived at the winning post of salvation with speed; while there is the other who is slow-moving but is desirous of emulating the winners; and then, there is the slack, the negligent who is falling to perish in the fire! The [extreme] right or left [positions] are misleading. The only 'high way' is the middle course."²

-
1. Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, Jamharat al-Amthāl, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1964), p. 408.
 2. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 15, vol. 1, p. 45.

In the third volume of Nahj al-Balāgha the same idea occurs again: "We are the central support [literally, cushion] to which the late-comer does [finally] arrive and to which the extremist in [the end] returns."¹ This, although making al-ṭarīq al-wustā, the pride-object, exclusive to one household at the time, the idea, however, remains the same.

The Language

The question as to what changes took place in the language when the Arabian societies were converted to Islam has not been answered in detail. We know, for example, that the terms al-salāt, al-sawm, al-hajj had different meanings. Of the adjectives the post-Islamic societies so freely branded people with, terms like al-mu'min, al-kāfir, al-munāfiq, the Jāhilī people were aware but they understood them differently.² But the few examples of change in meanings which have been handed down to us, prove either that little change had taken place or that not sufficient attention was devoted to it by the Muslim scholars. As far as the post-Islamic changes in the language were concerned, and as regards the new words, phrases and expressions which were either borrowed from other languages or were coined subsequently,

1. al-Sharīf, op. cit., No. 109, vol. 3, p. 176.

2. al-Suyūṭī, al-Muzhir, vol. 1 (Cairo, n.d.), p. 295.

the attitude of Muslim scholars remained hostile. The fact that although nearly a thousand years had elapsed but this hostility had not lessened, is reflected by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 A.H.) who, when describing the post-classical terms and words, remarks: "This is what had been innovated by the post-classical authors and writers whose words cannot be used as evidence [on linguistic matters]." ¹

It is interesting to note the evolution of the Arabic-cum-Islamic prose literature. In the beginning, one element alone seems to have the power to bestow respectability on a piece of elegant language written or spoken, and that element was the Qur'ān. It was important that an idea was presented in the attire of al-balāghah. It was still more important that it was done through borrowing some of the words from the Qur'ān. Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.) records an incident which took place in the court of Ziyād ibn Abīhi (d. 56 A.H.), the dreaded governor of Mu'āwiya. 'Imrān ibn ^{Hittān} ~~Hutān~~ having delivered a speech which he thought "by no means fell short of the oratorical heights nor did it leave any room for the blemish-seekers to discredit me", passed some of the people present and heard one of the shaikhs say: "This man would have been the most accomplished in oratory had his speech contained some quotations from the Qur'ān!" ²

1. al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., p. 304.

2. al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa al-Tabayīn, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1932), p. 3.

Next, we see the recognition of the traditions as the second pattern an author was to conform with. Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 821 A.H.) was merely repeating what Ibn Qutaibah (d. 213 A.H.) had already pointed out in his book Adab al-Kātib, when he said: "It is necessary for a writer to memorise a great deal of traditions from the Prophet."¹ But when al-Qalqashandī proceeded to add: "and also the related āthār from the Companions of the Prophet..."² he in fact pointed out the third phase of the evolution -- the stage where the processes came to rest. One notices that all the models or the standard patterns which were eventually recognised belonged to the same period, i.e. the first half of the first Islamic century, although the recording, amplification and purification of them continued up until the second half of the fifth century.

As a result, some of both the traditions and the āthār was invented in order to escape from the charge of innovation. The matter Nahj al-Balāgha consists of falls into the third category, al-āthār, and it is small wonder that it, too, has not escaped criticism.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has put forward stylistic and linguistic arguments for the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. In the sixth volume of his commentary he comments on the

-
1. Ibn Qutaibah, Adab al-Kātib (Cairo, 1300 A.H.), p. 6.
 2. al-Qalqashandī, Ṣubḥ al-A'shā, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1914), p. 201.

language of the book and says:

Know that we do not doubt that of all the speakers of the Arabic language amongst the forebears and the forthcomers, he ['Alī] is the most skilful in using the correct literary language except the words of God and the utterances of the Prophet. [And we hold such views] because the distinction of a speaker or a writer rests on two factors: firstly, on the words used as units; secondly, words used compoundly [in a phrase or a sentence]. The merit in using words, taking them as units, is that they must be clear and easy and conforming with one another. Neither should they be strange, nor complicated. The words used by 'Alī are so in totality. The merit in the words used in a clause is that the sentence, as a whole, should render clear and good meaning and to be quickly understood by the listener. In addition, it should also be the bearer of the qualities which distinguish one piece of kalām over the other. And those are the ones which have been named by the following generations as al-badī' [the art of good style] which might be achieved through al-muqābala (comparisons] or al-muṭābaqa [corresponding conformity], or husn al-taqṣīm

[meritorious classification] or radd ākhir
al-kalām ilā ṣadrih [keeping in touch with
the beginning till end], or al-tarsī' [the
art of inlaying and decorating the words],
or al-tashīm [proportioning the words rightly],
or al-tawshīh [arranging the words in stanzas]
or al-mumāthala [analogy, using of] or al-takāfu'
[mutual correspondence of the words] or
al-tasmīt [interlinking of the words], or
al-isti'āra [the metaphor], or latāfat
isti'māl al-majāz [subtleness derived from
figurative usage of words], al-muwāzana [the
balancing] and al-mushākala [using words of
common similarity]. There is no doubt that
all these merits are to be found in his
sermons and letters scattered and spread out.
These two qualities are not to be found in the
kalām of any one else...¹

A question arises: could it not have been possible
for a forgerer to manufacture the pieces which resembled
the original and the said variations of al-badī'? In a
society of restricted pursuits and bonded stylistic
variations was there a hallmark, a distinct pattern, an
individual style? Were 'Alī's utterances distinguishable
for critics nearer to him in terms of time?

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 278.

"Yes," says al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 A.H.). And the occasion on which he says it could not have been more in contraposition. It is in fact, when he is quoting a khutbah (sermon) from Mu'āwiya when he records the following:

This khutbah was related by Shu'aib ibn Ṣafwān and was also reported by al-Yaqturī in an augmented form and also some other people apart from him. They said: "When Mu'āwiya was dying he asked his mawlā [in this context, slave or servant] as to who was at the door. The mawlā replied: "A group of the Quraishites who are exchanging pleasantries between them over your pending death!" Mu'āwiya said: "I swear by God, there is nothing for them after me except the harmful." Then he gave permission for people to enter [and when they came in] he recited the following sermon:..."

Having recorded the sermon, al-Jāḥiẓ comments:

And in this sermon, may God prolong your life, there are varieties of wonders! One of which is that it bears no reference or [indeed] relevance to the circumstances under which Mu'āwiya had called the people in! The second is the style, categorising of men and the [type] of information given about them;

the [description of the] plight the people had been [living] in, viz, continuous suppression, [unjustifiable] social degradation, and being constantly in the state of "look out" [al-taqiyya], all this resembles more to that of 'Alī's style. The circumstances that the sermon describes and the meaning that it purports are more of 'Alī than of Mu'āwiya. The third is the fact that we do not find Mu'āwiya under any circumstances treading the path of the ascetic nor do we find him travelling along the way of the devotee! However, we write it for you and inform you as we, ourselves, have heard it. God only knows about the veracity of the informers -- a great deal of them!¹

Now, if this quotation proves that there was such a thing as an "identifiable style", it also indicates that the early periods were crowded with the reports whose truthfulness was very much in doubt. A book of Nahj al-Balāgha's magnitude and depending on the early traditions transmitted by reporters, some of whom may not have been as trustworthy as others, would thus be logically subject to spurious entries.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 655 A.H.), however, disagrees. To him the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha is beyond any

1. al-Jāhiz, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 29.

shadow of doubt. He bases his argument first on style:

I will give you an example which you may apply when comparing the speeches [al-kalām] of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ['Alī] and the speeches of the writers and the speakers who came after him. Compare the poems of Abū Tammām [d. 189 A.H.], al-Buḥturī [d. 284 A.H.], Abū Nuwās [d. 198 A.H.] and Muslim [d. 208 A.H.], with the poems of Imru' ul-Qais (d. 92 B.H.), al-Nābigha [d. 28 B.H.], al-Zubair [d. 3 B.H.] and al-A'shā (d. ?]. Now when you have compared the two, will you say that the poems of Abū Nuwās and of others named with him, are better than the poems of the poets belonging to the second group? I do not think you will say that. Nor anyone before you has done so. And the view [of the first named group being superior to the second] will not be held apart from the one who is completely ignorant of the science of al-bayān, the usage of linguistic decor and simplicity, al-faṣāḥah, and the circumstantial and required eloquence, al-balāghah. [Abū Nuwās and other members of his class will be preferred over Imru' ul-Qais and other poets of his class by the] one who does not know the difference between the original and the artificial and the distinction of the foregone over the

late-comers. Now that you have duly noted the difference, know that the kalām of Amīr al-Mu'minīn has the same relation [when compared with the other speakers and writers] as of Imru' ul-Qais over that of Abū Nuwās. In ['Alī's] case the excellence is even more obvious. For in the poems of Imru' ul-Qais there are some strange constructions and quaint words whereas you will not find similar features in the kalām of Amīr al-mu'minīn. And if you want to know more about 'Alī's style, look at the Qur'ān and know that people have agreed that the Qur'ān is in the highest class of al-faṣāḥa. Examine the Qur'ān thoroughly and consider how it has been free from complications in phrases and sentences (al-ta'qīd) and strangeness and oddity [al-gharābat] in the usages of words. And then look at the kalām of Amīr al-Mu'minīn. You will find it derived from its [the Qur'ān's] words and based upon its meanings and the school of thoughts. Being on the same track and in the same foot steps. Although it is not equal to it, nevertheless, it can be said that there is no speech [al-kalām] more eloquent, more high, more of prime merits...¹

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 83.

However, was al-Shu'ba (d. 160 A.H.) exaggerating when he stated that nine-tenths of the traditions were a pack of lies? Or was al-Dār Qutnī (d. 385 A.H.) being poetical when he said that a genuine (al-sahīh) tradition was as rare as a white hair on a black bull?¹ We have clear evidence that in the reign of Mu'āwiya (41-61 A.H.) there were some people who deliberately forged traditions.² Now when Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd found that the works of both the traditionists and the historians were full of 'Alī's utterances, could that be the reaction of the later men of letters who, regardless of the fact whether they were or were not Shī'ites, were enraged by the oppression of the truth? In short, are the 237 sermons, 79 letters and 480 short sayings that Nahj al-Balāgha consists of, the very utterances of 'Alī? Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd says:

There can be only two possibilities of either Nahj al-Balāgha being a total forgery and fabrication or the book being so in parts only. The first possibility is null and void for we know through the means of al-tawātur [i.e. acceptance of a tradition by one generation and its passing it to the next without the chain being broken] the soundness of the isnād [the list of the known

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 9, p. 105.

2. Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 63-73; Ibn al-Athīr, Jami' al-Uṣūl (Cairo, 1964), pp. 136-38.

narrators or transmitters] of some of the material right up to ['Alī] Amīr al-Mu'minīn. And that has been recorded by all or most of al-muhaddithūn [the recorders of traditions] and a great deal of which has also been preserved by al-mu'arrikhūn [the historians]. And these are not from the Shī'ites so that they had an axe to grind. The second possibility [i.e. the book being a part forgery] is also invalid in the light of what we have already said [about the style]. For whoever is familiar with the speech and the oratory and has mastered some aspects of the science of al-bayān [i.e. the art of stylish speaking and writing], and has acquired a taste in such matters, is bound to distinguish between the poor and the eloquent and between the eloquent and the most eloquent. Between the original [the early] and the muwallad [the modern]. [Such a man] will see the difference at once even if he comes across a few sheets of paper containing orations of a number of orators or even two of them. And he will be able to distinguish between the styles. Do you not see that we, with out knowledge of poetry and poetical criticism, when going through the poetical collection of Abū Tammām, if we come across a cluster

of al-qasā'id [odes] or a single qasīda which does not belong to him, we will know through our taste its alienation from that which truly belongs to Abū Tammām, his way, his method and his style in poetry? Do you not see that the specialists have eliminated many of the qasīdas from his collection of poems, simply because they did not conform to his pattern of style? The same was done in respect of the poems of Abū Nuwās when it was realised that some of them were neither his words nor from the accepted poems. This was done in respect of the poems of the other poets too [for the same reasons]. And the implements employed in the process [of elimination] were led by "taste". Now, you, when you examine Nahj al-Balāgha, will find that all of it is from the same water, same mould and the same style. Like the simple structure whose components do not vary from one another in essence. Or like the Qur'ān whose beginning is like its middle and the middle is like the end. Every Sūrah of it, every āya [verse] from it, is similar in its source, method, technique, manner and structure to the rest of the chapters and verses. If some of Nahj al-Balāgha were authentic and some forged, this would not have happened. And with this clear reasoning

the error of the one who assumes that the book or part of it has been wrongly attributed to Amīr al-Mu'minīn ['Alī], peace be on him, should be obvious to you.¹

Disagreeing with Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd about the total authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, I propose to base my criticism on the very method he has employed and the very data he has provided and the most of which I have translated in this chapter.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has been quoted as saying: "...the distinction of a speaker or a writer rests on two factors: firstly, on the words used as units; secondly, on the words used as components [of a sentence]." Let our first step, therefore, be to examine Nahj al-Balāgha for that characteristic and consider whether some of them are not in conformity with the language of the time. As Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has also said: "[see pages 228-29 of this chapter] that Nahj al-Balāgha is derived from the Qur'ānic words...", and as the Qur'ān is the only surviving guide of the early usages of the language, apart from the Jāhilī literature, comparisons with the Qur'ān would not only be necessary but, so to speak, natural. That has partly been done in this chapter. But here we would consider the words and the sentences which do not seem to be either in harmony with the Qur'ānic vocabulary or with the style, which can safely be assumed to be that of 'Alī and which we hope to discuss later on.

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 10, pp. 128-29.

1. Al-Sil'a. This word is used in Sermon No. 143 (vol. 2, p. 41) and it means "commodity" or assets connected with commerce. There is some evidence that this word came to be used when the Arabs became prosperous and attained sophistication after the conquests, and turned to commerce on a large scale. In the Qur'ān an asset or commodity has been expressed through the word al-matā' which has been used twenty-nine times. If al-sil'a had existed or, assuming it did exist, was in usage, the Qur'ān would have used it at least once out of that twenty-nine times if only for the sake of variation. But the word does not exist in the Qur'ān in the meaning it has been used in Nahj al-Balāgha or in any other meaning. Al-matā', on the other hand, has been used in: 2:36, 7:24, 21:111, 2:241, 3:14, 3:5, 57:20, 3:197, 4:77, 9:39, 33:60, 42:36, 43:34, 10:70, 13:26, 16:117, 24:29, 40:39, 13:17, 2:236, 2:240, 5:99, 10:23, 28:61, 11:3, 16:80, 36:44, 33:53, 56:71-3, 79:32-3, 80:25-32. Note particularly the following usages of al-matā' which has been used in the same meaning as al-sil'a in Nahj al-Balāgha: 3:14, 3:197, 24:29, 16:80, 33:53 and 80:25-32.

2. Al-hawā'ij. The word al-hāja meaning need, want or pressing requirement, has been used by the Qur'ān in singular form only as in Sūrahs: 12:68; 40:80; and 59:9. But the plural form of it, al-hawā'ij, which has been used in Nahj al-Balāgha in No. 101, vol. 3, p. 172;

No. 372, vol. 3, p. 242; and No. 51, vol. 3, p. 90, is the least likely to have been uttered by 'Alī. There is sufficient evidence to prove that the word was not in usage at the time. Al-Mubarrad (d. 285 A.H.) writes:

The plural of al-hāja is hāj on the scale of fa'la. As you say hāma [the singular, meaning the skull, head, top or summit] and hām plural of the same word] and sā'a [meaning time, present (or "promised") time, hence the use of the word for a wristwatch] and sā' [the same word in plural form]. As for the plural word al-hawā'ij is concerned, this is not found in the utterances of the Arabs despite its being used frequently by al-muwallidīn [the writers and the speakers of the post-classical period]. There is no set measure [qiyās] for it either [in the language of the early Arabs].¹

The second evidence comes from a person who was perhaps the highest authority on linguistic matters in his time, that is al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213 A.H.). Abū Naṣr, Ismā'īl al-Jawharī (d. 406 A.H.) was contemporary to the collector of Nahj al-Balāgha, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, and quotes al-Aṣma'ī as saying that the word al-hawā'ij is the

1. al-Mubarrad, al-Kāmil, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1936), p. 242.

innovation of the late age (muwallad). "Al-Aṣma'ī," writes al-Jawharī, "never accepted al-hawā'ij being the plural form [of al-hāja]." ¹

3. Al-Jabriyah. This word occurs in the sermon called al-Qāsi'a, No. 187, vol. 2, p. 161, and for the evidence of its being manufactured at a later date, we have the authority of Abū 'Ubaid, Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224 A.H.), who asserts that the term is muwallad, an innovation of the post-classical age ² and it is not unlikely that the word was attributed to 'Alī by the upholders of the doctrine of al-jabr ³ to gain respectability.

There are times when the technocrats and the specialists, because of haste or because of high office, tend to overlook the simple yet fundamental dictates of common sense. One such rule is that a man, in the storehouse of his memory, has some pet words and some favourite ideas which he tends to repeat in some form or other. In a book containing 237 speeches, 79 letters and 480 sayings, we expect to find repetitions. And so there are. For example, 'Alī's repudiation of the involvement with the murder of 'Uthmān occurs in No. 21, p. 55, then again in No. 30, p. 71; No. 72, p. 122; No. 163, p. 98; No. 169,

1. al-Jawharī, al-Sihāh, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1956), p. 308.

2. al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 307.

3. For the details of the doctrine and the intellectual sect which came to be known as al-Jabriyah, see al-Milal wa al-Nihāl by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī.

p. 107, vol. 2. In the early days of Islam and under the command of Muḥammad, 'Alī's sword had shed some valuable blood; that of his own tribe, the Quraishites, and particularly of the house of the Umayyads which had not been forgotten and the memories of it played the major part when it came to choosing a Caliph. The most of the prominent members of that house, therefore refrained from voting if they did not come out in open opposition to him. Reaction to this is reflected in No. 32, p. 78, vol. 1; No. 167, p. 103, vol. 2; but when the Caliphate did in the end come to him he was not keen. This is reflected in No. 3, p. 31, vol. 1; No. 53, p. 99, vol. 1; No. 88, p. 128, vol. 1, amongst others. Yet 'Alī had always considered himself to be the prime person, if not the only one, worthy of the Holy Office. This is shown in No. 3, p. 25, vol. 1; No. 5, p. 37, vol. 1; No. 9, p. 38, vol. 1; No. 25, p. 62, vol. 1; No. 71, p. 120, vol. 1; No. 73, p. 123, vol. 1; No. 167, p. 102, vol. 2, amongst others. The battle of al-Jamal was fought on two fronts: the first is the obvious, but the second was the linguistic. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd quotes both al-Madā'inī and al-Wāqidī in saying that never before so much rajaz was composed, recited, and memorised as on the day of al-Jamal.¹ This is further confirmed by the sheer magnitude of the books composed by the early writers on subjects of al-Jamal and al-Ṣiffīn, although both the wars proved no less than

1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 253.

a disaster for 'Alī and his followers. Yet it seemed that a victory had been scored on the linguistic front which was to echo down to the present time. And those wars also manifest 'Alī's partiality towards eloquence and style more than they do his skill in the fields of prudence and expediency. References to al-Jamal abound in Nahj al-Balāgha, as in No. 12, p. 40, vol. 1; No. 13, p. 41, vol. 1; No. 21, p. 55, vol. 1; No. 98, p. 196, vol. 1; No. 154, vol. 2, p. 44; No. 164, p. 99, vol. 2; No. 167, p. 103, vol. 2, No. 168, p. 105, vol. 2.

These, however, are themes. If we return to vocabulary items and the criticism of the words as units, one finds that there are some which, apart from the fact that they have not been used by the Qur'ān, occur in Nahj al-Balāgha just once, which considering the volume of the sermons, the letters and the sayings, suggests a different taste, a different memory and a different time. Now let us examine some words of this nature:

4. On page twenty-three, in the second sermon, occurs a sentence: wa taza'za'at suwārī al-Yaqīn, i.e. "The columns of belief were shaken right down to their foundations." The key word on which the sentence has been constructed is suwārī (which is the plural of sarīya, meaning column or pillar), which has been annexed to al-yaqīn (literally, certainty in the existence of God, the Hereafter, etc.). Now this word al-yaqīn has been used, in one form or the other, twenty-five times in the book, but al-suwārī appears no more. Like the

palatial and elaborate constructions, which the word suggests, the metaphorical use of it points to a later period.

5. Similarly, al-takhyā which has been used in sermon No. 3, p. 24, vol. 1, is not used by the Qur'ān. Nor in Nahj al-Balāgha elsewhere. For the word "cloud" (which al-takhyā means) the Qur'ān used al-sahāb, which has also been used in Nahj al-Balāgha in No. 87, p. 175, vol. 1; No. 111, p. 225, vol. 1; No. 161, p. 95, vol. 2; No. 180, p. 142, vol. 2; No. 472, vol. 3, p. 265; or ghamām, which also appears in Nahj al-Balāgha, in No. 145, p. 46, vol. 2; No. 206, p. 218, vol. 2; No. 177, p. 127, vol. 2; No. 111, p. 225, vol. 1, No. 87, p. 175, vol. 1.

6. Sajīs. Yet another word appears in No. 33, p. 78, vol. 1, which has been annexed with the next noun, al-layālī, the two nouns together giving the meaning of "never". This expression does not occur in the Qur'ān nor has it been used elsewhere in Nahj al-Balāgha. And as it does not seem to exist in the Jāhilī poetry, it is probable that it belonged to the third century A.H.

7. Al-laqam. This word appears in No. 55, vol. 1, p. 100, meaning "the high way" and it is likely to be of late usage. It does not appear in the book again nor has it been used by the Qur'ān. Its "transplantation" into 'Alī's sermon, if the rest, or most of the text, is accepted as genuine, is further proved by the text quoted

by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212 A.H.) in his book, Waq'at Siffīn. His version is "'alā ammaḍ al-alam".¹ And here perhaps, is one of the strongest indications of the manipulations the collection had been subjected to. It is a possibility that someone, noticing the preceding word muḍīyan, thought that al-laqam would be more eloquent than ammaḍ al-alam. That may be true. But at the same time it does prove the possibility that the ornaments were exchanged for originality.

8. Zabrah. This word has been used in No. 80, vol. 1, p. 132 and again it has the same anomalies as the previous one. It is not used by the Qur'ān and it appears just once in Nahj al-Balāgha. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd translates it as "the call", then proceeds to qualify, "the one which has the air of admonition or rebuke."² It also appears that the word was in fashion in the second or third centuries, or both, but then it was foresaken as no reference to it is made by the modern dictionaries.

9. No. 87, vol. 1, is a sermon which has been recorded by the collector with the following remarks: "It is known as al-Ashbāh and is one of the most glorious speeches of him ['Alī], peace be on him. He delivered it when annoyed by someone's request to define God as if he ['Alī] had

1. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waq'at Siffīn (Cairo, 1382 A.H.), p. 520.

2. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 251.

seen Him!" In this case the isnād has also been mentioned: Mas'ada ibn Ṣadaqa, who took it from the sixth Imām of the Shī'ites, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 A.H.). According to al-Khaṭīb, the book in which Mas'ada had collected the speeches of 'Alī was called Khuṭub Amīr al-Mu'minīn and had survived up to the time of Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrainī (d. 1107 or 1109 A.H.). For Hāshim al-Baḥrainī makes use of this book in his Tafsīr al-Burhān.¹ However, the authenticity of the sermon in question is subject to doubt on account of certain words which it contains, words like dhāt which, in the genitive case, is used with God as the second and the governed noun. The sentence actually reads: wa ghamadat madākhil al-'uqūl fī haith lā tablughuhū al-ṣifāt litanāwuli 'ilm dhātihi.² The entrances, says the above sentence, of rational approaches are shut to His attributes so that the knowledge of His Self cannot be acquired (through the attributes). And this is the philosophical premise that one can only acquire the knowledge of a being through its attributes. This distinction between the Divine Self and His attributes is not understood, or at least spoken of, by the community of the Companions or the Muslims of the first century. This is the language of the Mu'tazila who appeared in the

1. al-Khaṭīb, Masādir Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1975), p. 168.

2. Nahj al-Balāgha, No. 89, vol. 1, p. 161.

first decade of the second century and who, on record, were the first to formulate and propagate what became known as "dogmatic theology". They preached al-tawhīd (the belief in the Unity of God) as

the strictest profession of monotheism [against any kind of dualism]; denial of all resemblance between Allāh and His creatures (against the anthropomorphism of the muḥaddithūn on the one hand and those of the Rāfida (?) and Manichaeans on the other); the divine attributes recognised (against the Jahmīya) but deprived of their real existence; they are not entities added to the divine being (this would be shirk; against the Ṣifatīyah among the ahl al-ḥadīth) but identical with the being (Waṣil, Abu Hudhail)."¹

The Qur'ān enlists ninety-nine ṣifāt of His Beautiful Names (al-asmā' al-husnā) but does not distinguish Self (dhāt) and the attributes (al-Ṣifāt). The opening of every Sūrah, except LX, viz, bismillāh al-rahmān al-rahīm, has the dhāt and ṣifāt together and was understood as: In the name of God who is Merciful and who is Compassionate. The Mu'tazila insisted that the verse must be understood as: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate".

1. H. S. Nyberg, "al-Mu'tazila", Encyclopaedia of Islam, pp. 787-93.

Self being the same as the attribute and the attribute same as Self. This is how the verse is translated now. But this is a step forward both in the understood concept of al-tawhīd and in time. And, therefore, this sentence of al-Ashbāh, and others like it, are not likely to have been originated in the first half of the first century.

These examples, together with others cited earlier, do not invalidate the claim of the general authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. However, they do make it clear that parts of the text have been subjected to revision and embellishment by later writers. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī himself may have been responsible for some of these "improvements".

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The first Chapter of this thesis has already introduced Nahj al-Balāgha to the reader and, in fair measure, underlined its importance. Yet the person who has read it would, perhaps, tend to ask: why is it then that the book has so far remained, relatively speaking, in total obscurity? Why is it that even some of the Muslim students of Islamic disciplines are not aware of it? The answer lies in the attitude of the early Western scholars who regarded Nahj al-Balāgha as total fabrication. However, they held such views because they were led by the seventh century biographer, Ibn Khallikān, who recorded in his Wafayāt al-A'yān: "It has been said that the book is not the collection of the utterances of 'Alī and the one who has collected it and attributed it to him is the one who has invented it" (q.v. Chapter II). This view was further strengthened by the eighth century writer and scholar, al-Dhahabī, who added a few more words of his own in repudiation of the authenticity of the book. Al-Dhahabī's contemporary, Ibn Taimiyyah, with all his undisputed religious authority, also challenged the authenticity of some of the contents of the book and pointed to the area which happens to be the weakest point of the book, i.e. lack of isnād. However, it should be noted that while Ibn Khallikān's remarks imply total fabrication, al-Dhahabī

uses the sentence: aktharuhū bāṭil (i.e., most of the contents of the book are invalid). On account of al-Ṣafadī's evidence (q.v. Chapter II), it appears that Ibn Taimiyyah did believe that some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha were genuine. Modern criticism of Nahj al-Balāgha either follows Ibn Khallikān, as Clement Huart and Gibb, or questions part of the contents, like Aḥmad Amīn, Ṣafā Khulūṣī, and Jamīl Sulṭān (q.v. Chapter II) and in doing so, they really take the same position as that of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taimiyyah in the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, there is the weight of the total Shī'ite population, which, since the year 400 A.H., has held the book to be totally authentic; and then there are the commentators, over a hundred or so, who wrote their commentaries on Nahj al-Balāgha, believing that every word that Nahj al-Balāgha contained was actually enunciated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 655 A.H.), who was not a Shī'ite, takes up the issue of the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha and concludes that it cannot be assumed that the book was totally or partially forged (q.v. Chapter V).

In order to discover the truth, attempts have been made in this thesis to locate the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha in the accepted historical works which were composed prior to the existence of Nahj al-Balāgha. The sources investigated include Sulaim ibn Qais (d. ca. 90/708); Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, better known as Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. 170/786); Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212/827); al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868);

al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892); al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/895); al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897); al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922); Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926); al-Kulainī (d. 328/939); al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), and al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) (q.v. Chapter III). This investigation, while proving some of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha to be as early as the work containing them, nevertheless leaves out a considerable area for which only Nahj al-Balāgha constitutes the earliest source. For example, entries Nos. 63, 76, 83, 85, 88, 93, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 106, 110, and 111 in the first volume, and Nos. 126, 127, 136, 138, 148, 149, 152, 154, 155, 158, 159, 163, 173, 174, 181, 183, 184, 186, 189, 192, 193, 194, 196, 209, 212 and 221 in the second volume, remain outside the works mentioned above. It is true that some of these speeches have been reported by Qādī al-Qudā'ī (d. 454 A.H.), 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, Ibn Shākir (d. 457 A.H.), al-Āmidī (d. 550 A.H.), and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654 A.H.); yet their works are post-Nahj al-Balāgha and, therefore, cannot constitute a positive evidence in the authenticity of its contents.

The third aspect of the investigation engages itself in identifying the parts or the sentences in the speeches of Nahj al-Balāgha which can positively be stated to be spurious. Like some words which on the evidence of the third and the twelfth centuries' linguistic authorities, like al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213 A.H.), al-Mubarrad (d. 285 A.H.) and al-Jawharī (d. 406 A.H.), were not in use at the time of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (q.v. Chapter V); or like some of

the philosophical notions and detailed expressions used in Nahj al-Balāgha which are neither found in the Qur'ān nor in the contemporary literature (q.v. Chapter IV).

But the parts of Nahj al-Balāgha which have been positively proved are further supported by the circumstantial evidence, i.e. the prominence of the sermons or public speaking in the Jāhilī prose, Islam's endorsement of it, the role of the khutbah in the Islamic and post-Islamic governments, and the compilation of it by the succeeding generations. Ṣafā Khulūṣī argues (q.v. Chapter II) that the usage of al-saj', or rhymed prose, goes against the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha. This has been disproved by rendering the examples of the speeches of al-kāhin and the khaṭīb of the Jāhilī period, the main body of whose speeches contained rhymed prose (q.v. Chapter IV).

Yet in the same area (i.e. the proven parts of Nahj al-Balāgha) a hitherto untouched feature has been highlighted. That is, the part played by the editor, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, in, perhaps, polishing up the words or possibly substituting a plain word for the more elegant one. One example of this is the word al-laqam, which appears in entry No. 55, vol. 1, p. 100, meaning the high way. This was perhaps substituted, for in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's text the sentence appears as 'alā and al-alam, and his version appears to be more in conformity with the rest of the sermon (q.v. Chapter V). Other examples of the same pattern have been pointed out in the same chapter, and in Chapter IV.

An examination of Chapter II in this thesis will reveal that amongst the critics of the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāgha, both the medieval and modern, the majority stand for the authenticity of some unspecified parts of Nahj al-Balāgha. While the objections of the critics have been directed to some specified areas of the contents of the book, for example both al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taimiyyah concentrate on entry No. 3 only. The main contribution of this thesis, therefore, is seen to be in pinpointing the areas of the contents of Nahj al-Balāgha which can positively be proved, while underlining the areas which can safely be assumed to be spurious, entry No. 3 included.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ḥalabī, Akhbār Šiffīn, Ph.D. Thesis,
University of St. Andrew (Scotland), 1974.
- 'Abd al-Zahrā' al-Khaṭīb, Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāghah, 4 vols.,
Beirut, 1975.
- Abū 'Alī al-Qālī (Ismā'īl ibn al-Qāsim), al-Amālī, Bulaq,
1334/1915.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī ('Alī ibn al-Ḥusain), al-Aghānī,
24 volumes, Cairo, 1974.
- , Maqātil al-Tālibīn, Najaf, 1965.
- Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd Allāh),
al-Šanā'atayn, Cairo, 1952.
- , Jamharat al-Amthāl, Cairo, 1964.
- , al-Awā'il, Damascus, 1975.
- Abū Tammām (Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Ṭā'ī), al-Hamāsah, Calcutta,
1856.
- Āghā Buzurg Tehrānī, al-Dharī'ah ilā taṣānīf al-Shī'ah,
25 volumes, Tehran, 1978.
- Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām, Cairo, 1928.

‘Arshī Rāmpūrī (Imtiyāz ‘Alī), Istinād Nahj al-Balāgha,
Tehran, 1377/1957.

al-Baghdādī (‘Abd al-Qāhir), al-Farq bain al-Firaq, Cairo,
1328/1910.

al-Balādhurī (Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā), Ansāb al-Ashrāf, vol. 1,
Cairo, 1959; vol. 2, Beirut, 1973; vol. 3,
Jerusalem, 1936.

al-Bakrī (‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Abū ‘Ubaid),
Faṣl al-Maqāl fī Sharḥ Kitāb al-Amthāl, Khartoum,
1958.

al-Bāqilānī (Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib), I‘jāz al-Qur’ān,
Cairo, n.d.

Brockelmann (Carl), Geschichte der Arabischen Litterature,
3 volumes, Berlin, 1902.

Carlyle (Thomas), Collected works of, London, 1890.

al-Dhahabī (Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad), Mizān al-I‘tidāl,
4 volumes, Cairo, 1963.

-----, Tadhkirat al-Huffāz, 4 volumes, Hyderabad,
1333/1914.

al-Dināwarī (Aḥmad ibn Dā‘ūd), al-Akḥbār al-Tiwal, Cairo,
1960.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, U.S.A., 1974.

Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, 1970.

al-Fākhūrī (Ḥannā), Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1951.

Faiḍ al-Islām (‘Alī Naqī), Tarjuma’i Nahj al-Balāghah, Tehran, 1371/1951.

Fīruzabādī (Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb), al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt, 4 volumes, Bulaq, 1302/1884.

Gibb (H. A. R.), Arabic Literature, Oxford, 1974.

Goldziher (Ignaz), Muslim Studies, 2 volumes, London, 1971.

Guillaume (Alfred), translation of the Sīrah of Ibn Ishāq, London, 1968.

Ḥāj Khalīfa (Muṣṭafā ibn ‘Abd Allāh), Kashf al-Zunūn, 2 volumes, Istanbul, 1943.

al-Ḥākīm (Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh), Ma‘rifat ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 1937.

Hitti (Philip), History of the Arabs, London, 1961.

Huart (Clement), A History of Arabic Literature, London, 1903.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (‘Iz al-Dīn, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, 20 volumes, Cairo, 1959.

Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad), al-'Iqd al-Farīd,
4 volumes, Cairo, 1928.

Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (Aḥmad), al-Futūḥ, 4 volumes, Hyderabad,
1969.

Ibn al-Athīr (Mubārak ibn Muḥammad), al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb
al-Ḥadīth, 5 volumes, Cairo, 1969.

-----, Jāmi' al-Uṣūl, Cairo, 1969.

Ibn al-Athīr ('Alī ibn Muḥammad), al-Kāmil, 12 volumes,
Cairo, 1883.

-----, al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb, Cairo, 1357/1938.

Ibn Bābwaih al-Qummī (Muḥammad ibn 'Alī), 'Ilal al-Sharā'i',
Najaf, 1963.

-----, Amālī, Najaf, 1970.

-----, Ma'ānī al-Akḥbār, Najaf, 1971.

Ibn Duraid (Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan), al-Mujtanā, Hyderabad,
1342/1923.

-----, al-Ishtiḳāq, Gotteburg, 1854.

Ibn Faqīh (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad), al-Buldān, Leiden, 1885.

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (Aḥmad ibn 'Alī), al-Isābah fī
Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābah, 3 volumes, Calcutta, 1856.

-----, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, 12 volumes, Hyderabad,
1326/1908.

Ibn Hibbān (Muḥammad), Mashāhīr 'Ulamā' al-Amsār, Cairo, 1959.

Ibn 'Imād ('Abd al-Ḥayy), Shadharāt al-Dhahab, 8 volumes, Cairo, 1351/1932.

Ibn al-Jawzī ('Abd al-Raḥmān), al-Muntazam, 10 volumes, Hyderabad, 1358/1939.

Ibn Khaldūn ('Abd al-Raḥmān), al-Muqaddimah, Beirut, n.d.

Ibn Khallikān (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad), Wafayāt al-A'yān, 8 volumes, Beirut, n.d.

Ibn Maitham (Maitham ibn 'Alī ibn Maitham), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, 5 volumes, Tehran, 1368 A.H.

Ibn Manẓūr (Muḥammad ibn Mukarram), Lisān al-'Arab, 20 volumes, Cairo, 1301/1883.

Ibn al-Mu'tazz ('Abd Allāh), al-Badī', London, 1935.

Ibn Nadīm (Muḥammad ibn Ishāq), al-Fihrist, trans. Bayard Dodge, 2 volumes, New York, 1970.

Ibn Qutaibah ('Abd Allāh ibn Muslim), 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār, Berlin, 1900.

-----, Adab al-Kātib, Cairo, 1300/1882.

-----, Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah, Cairo, 1904.

-----, al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā', Paris, 1947.

-----, al-Ma'ārij, Cairo, 1960.

Ibn Rashīq (al-Ḥasan), al-'Umadah, Cairo, 1955.

Ibn Sa'd (Muḥammad), al-Ṭabaqāt, 9 volumes, Leiden, 1912-40.

Ibn Shahr Ashūb (Muḥammad), Ma'ālīm al-'ulamā', Najaf, 1961.

Ibn Shu'bah (Ḥasan ibn 'Alī), Tuhuf al-'Uqūl, Beirut, 1973.

Ibn Taghrī Burdī (Yūsuf), al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, 12 volumes, Cairo, 1357 A.H.

Ibn Taymiyyah (Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm), Minhāj al-Sunan al-Nabawīyah, 4 volumes, Bulaq, 1321/1912.

Imru' al-Qais, Dīwān, Beirut, 1970.

Ja'far Ḥusain (Muftī), Tarjuma'i Nahj al-Balāghah, Lahore, 3175/1955.

al-Jāḥiz ('Amr ibn Baḥr), Mukhtārāt Fuṣūl al-Jāḥiz, Ms No. Or. 3138, British Museum, London.

-----, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, 3 volumes, Cairo, 1332/1913.

-----, Risālah fī Manāqib al-Atrāk, Ms No. Or. 3183, British Library, London.

-----, al-Ḥayawān, 7 volumes, Cairo, 1906.

Jamīl Sultān, Etude sur Nahj al-Balagha, Paris, 1940.

al-Jawharī (Ismā'īl ibn Ḥammād), al-Sihāh, 6 volumes, Cairo, 1377/1957.

Jurjī Zaidān, Tārīkh al-Tammadun al-Islāmī, 4 volumes,
Cairo, 1905.

Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusain, al-Himmah fī Ma'rifat al-Ā'immah,
Cairo, n.d.

al-Kāshānī (Fath Allāh), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Tehran,
n.d.

Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (Hādī), Mustadrak Nahj al-Balāghah,
Najaf, n.d.

al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (Aḥmad ibn 'Alī), Tārīkh Baghdād,
14 volumes, Cairo, 1931.

al-Khū'ī (Ḥabīb Allāh), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Tehran, n.d.

al-Kintūrī (I'jāz Ḥusain), Kashf al-Ḥujub wa al-Astār,
Calcutta, 1912.

al-Kulainī (Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb), Uṣūl al-Kāfī, Najaf,
1969.

-----, Frū' al-Kāfī, Najaf, n.d.

-----, al-Rawḍah min al-Kāfī, Tehran, 1389.

al-Kutubī (Muḥammad ibn Shākir), Fuwāt al-Wafayāt,
2 volumes, 1951.

Lāhījī (Muḥammad Bāqir), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Iran, n.d.

al-Maidanī (Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad), Majma' al-Amathāl,
2 volumes, Cairo, 1955.

Majlisī (Muḥammad Bāqir), Bihār al-Anwār, 20 volumes,
Tehran, n.d.

al-Māmiqānī ('Abd Allāh), Itaqān al-Maqāl, Najaf, n.d.

-----, Miqyās al-Hidāyah, Najaf, 1345/1926.

al-Mas'ūdī ('Alī ibn al-Ḥusain), Murūj al-Dhahab, 4 volumes,
Cairo, 1948.

-----, al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf, Cairo, 1938.

-----, Ithbāt al-Waṣṣīyyah, Qumm, n.d.

al-Mubarrad (Muḥammad ibn Yazīd), al-Kāmil, 3 volumes,
Cairo, 1936-37.

al-Mufīd (Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad), al-Irshād, Tehran,
1377/1957.

-----, al-Jamal, Najaf, n.d.

Muḥsin al-Amīn al-'Āmulī, A'yān al-Shī'ah, 25 volumes,
Damascus, 1935.

Muḥammad 'Askarī Ja'farī, translation of Nahj al-Balāghah,
Karachi, n.d.

Muḥammad Māh, Tārīkh, India Office Library, London, Ms
No. 579.

Muḥammad Ṣādiq, Tarjuma'i Nahj al-Balāghah, Lucknow, n.d.

Muir (Sir William), The Caliphate, London, 1891.

- al-Mutannabbī (Aḥmad ibn Ḥusain), Dīwān, Cairo, 1944.
- al-Najjāshī (Aḥmad ibn 'Alī), al-Fihrist, Najaf, n.d.
- Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waq'at Ṣiffīn, Cairo and Qumm, 1962.
- al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shī'ah, Istanbul, 1931.
- Nicholson (R. A.), A Literary History of the Arabs,
Cambridge, 1969.
- Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad al-Qāḍī, Da'ā'im al-Islām, Cairo, 1938.
- al-Nuwairī (Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb), Nihāyat al-'Arab,
20 volumes, Cairo, 1955.
- W. al-Qāḍī, "An Early Fatimid Political Document", Studia
Islamica XLIII, Paris, 1978.
- al-Qalqashandī (Aḥmad), Ṣubḥ al-A'shā, 14 volumes, Cairo,
1916.
- al-Qiftī ('Alī ibn Yūsuf), Inbāh al-Ruwāt, Cairo, 1950.
- , Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā', Leipzig, 1903.
- al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, al-Majāzāt al-Nabawīyyah, Najaf, 1328.
- al-Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Mu'jam al-Uḍabā', 2 volumes, Beirut,
1961.
- Ra'īs Aḥmad Ja'farī, Tarjuma'i Nahj al-Balāghah, Lahore,
1978.

al-Rawghanī (Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ), Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah,
Iran, n.d.

al-Rāzī (Muḥammad ibn 'Umar), Tafsīr al-Kabīr, 8 volumes,
Cairo, 1307/1889.

Ṣafā Khulūṣī, "The Authenticity of Nahj al-Balagha",
Islamic Review (October, 1950), London.

al-Ṣafadī (Khalīl ibn Aibak), al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt,
10 volumes, Weisbaden, 1974.

al-Shahristānī (Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm), al-Milal
wa al-Nihal, 2 volumes, Cairo, 1961.

al-Shahristānī (Hibat al-Dīn), Mā huwa Nahj al-Balāghah?,
Najaf, n.d.

Shawqī Ḍaif, al-'Asr al-Jāhilī, Cairo, 1961.

Straley (Dona S.), Perspective and Method in Early Islamic
Historiography, Ph.D. Thesis, University of
Edinburgh, 1977.

Sulaim ibn Qais, al-Kitāb, Qumm, n.d.

al-Suyūṭī ('Abd al-Raḥmān), al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān,
2 volumes, Cairo, 1967.

-----, Tārīkh al-Khulafā', Beirut, 1970.

-----, al-Muzhir, 2 volumes, Cairo, n.d.

al-Ṭabarī (Muḥammad ibn Jarīr), Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk,
10 volumes, Cairo, 1964.

Ṭāhā Ḥusain, Fī al-Adab al-Jāhilī, Cairo, 1927.

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, 7 volumes, Cairo, 1933.

al-Tha'ālabī ('Abd al-Malik), Yatīmat al-Dahr, 2 volumes,
Cairo, 1947.

al-Ṭūsī (Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan), al-Fihrist, Najaf, 1961.

Ustādī (Raza), Madārik Nahj al-Balāghah, Qumm, n.d.

Watt (W. Montgomery), Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān,
Edinburgh, 1970.

al-Yāfi'ī ('Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad), Mir'āt al-Jināh,
Hyderabad, 1333/1914.

al-Ya'qūbī (Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb), al-Tārīkh, 2 volumes,
Beirut, 1960.

Zafar Maḥdī, Salsabīl-e-Faṣāhat, Lucknow, n.d.

Zaid ibn 'Alī, Kitāb al-Ṣafwah, Ms Or. 3977, British
Library, London.

Zakī Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī fī al-Qarn al-Rābi',
Cairo, 1934.